Conflicts of High Country Landscape(s)

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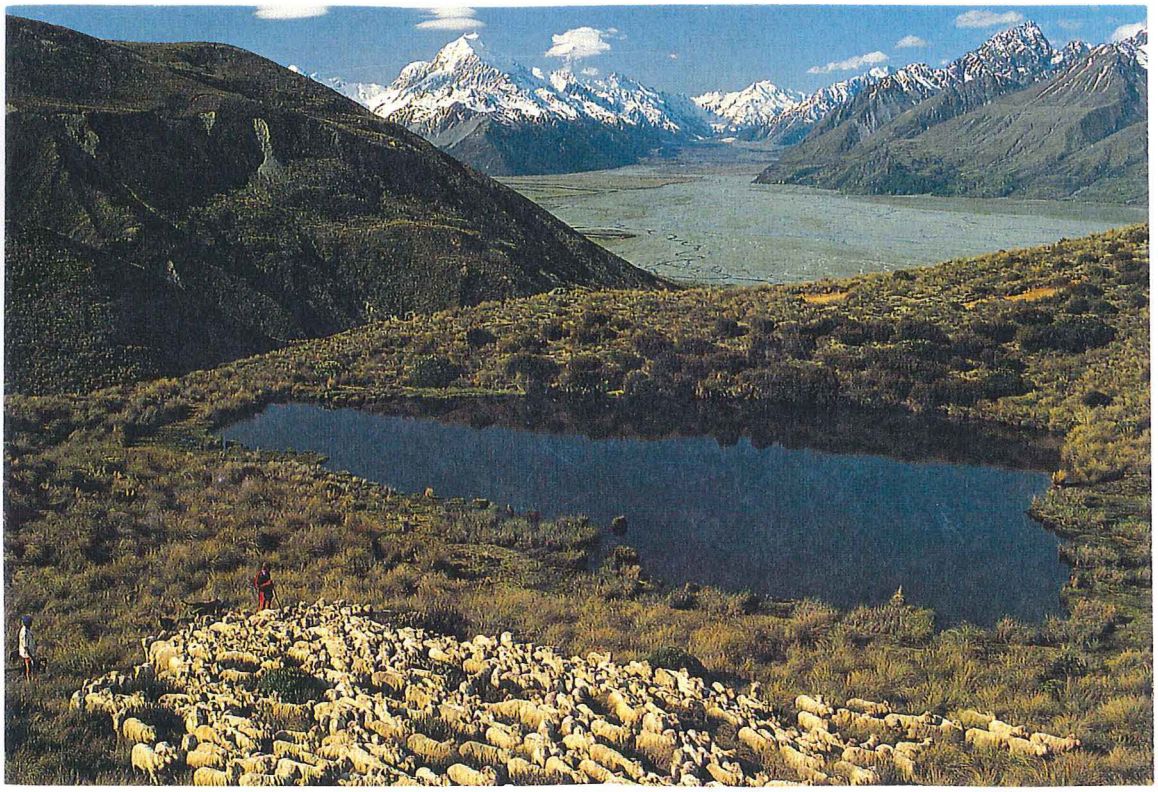

Abstract

The landscapes of the South Island high country are valued by a diverse range of interests. More recently, high country environments have become the setting for a number of conflicts contested by different values, at different spatial scales. This thesis examines the underlying causes for these conflicts.

For many New Zealanders, high country environments arouse a range of symbolic images which are regarded as icons of nationhood. A variety of groups claim a role in the management of high country landscapes based from a symbolic attachment to land.

The high country has historically been valued as a landscape from which to derive material gain, particularly from pastoral farming. The emergence of a more diverse range of values for high country landscapes have become apparent amidst a changing political economic, environmental and cultural context. There have been growing concerns that traditional high country commercial land uses are economically and environmentally unsustainable. In a postmodern era, a range of commercial and non-commercial land uses have developed in the high country which have led to incompatible and conflicting values. It is from within this context that a process of reform has been developed to try and reconcile these differences.

An examination of some key issues at the local scale provides some important insights for an understanding of high country conflicts. In particular, the Upper Waimakariri and Upper Rakaia Basins are focused upon to investigate the conflicts arising from Ngai Tahu attempts to regain a role in the management of high country landscapes, issues of foreign ownership, and the conflicts between production and preservation.

Just as there is no one high country, there is no single solution to the conflicts which have developed. Progress can be made however, by forging a number of locally based resolutions which recognise the multiplicity of interests for which high country landscapes are valued.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1) Thesis Overview

The South Island high country is seen as an integral part of the heritage and identity of many New Zealanders. *"The high country is both the soul and the backbone of New Zealand"* (Fitzharris and Kearsley 1987: 197). High country landscapes represent a number of diverse environments which have more recently evoked a variety of conflicting management values, ranging from preservation to production. High country lands have become the *"battle ground"* (Federated Farmers 1992: 18) for the competing objectives of different interest groups. While facing a range of serious environmental problems, the high country is presently undergoing a process of management reform which stands to transform these important cultural landscapes.

Following European settlement in the 1850s, the high country came to be managed largely in terms of its value for agricultural production, particularly wool. The high country was seen as an important landscape from which to derive material benefit for the development of the colonial economy. Extensive pastoralism was established as the major land use throughout much of the high country. European farming practices have however, been associated with widespread ecological degradation. The cumulative effects of burning, overgrazing, plus pest and weed infestations (particularly rabbits), have had a major impact upon high country environments and have been exacerbated by the harsh climate. Although conservation measures have been initiated in order to conserve soil quality and sustain farming production, environmental problems persist.

Traditionally high country pastoral lands were valued for one primary purpose, economic production. Different land use values in the high country were clearly separated between conservation lands (such as National parks) and pastoral landscapes. High country pastoral lands are now however, valued for a diverse range of commercial and non-commercial land uses. Some of these land uses are seen to be incompatible, and hence a range of conflicts have arisen between different groups seeking to gain the benefits from the control and use of these landscapes.

Recently there has been the emergence and acknowledgment of a more diverse range of values and interests which impinge upon land use management in high country landscapes. As well as farming, high country lands possess a mix of nature conservation, Maori, public recreation, tourism, historical, landscape, hydropower generation, forestry, and foreign investment values. Representatives of these groups, such as the Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board, Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) and the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (RFBPS), have formed to challenge what they perceive as a farming hegemony, and demand their own stakes in high country management. The conservation and recreation lobby groups in particular, argue that there are alternative land uses to extensive pastoralism (including nature conservation) which are eminently more suited with fragile high country environments (Maturin 1994; Turner 1994).

1.2) High Country Landscapes - Natural Characteristics

The South Island high country occupies approximately 10% of the land mass of New Zealand. Situated between the low country of the hills and plains, and the broken snow-capped ranges of the Southern Alps, the South Island high country forms a sizeable physiographic unit. The high country has been broadly identified as those lands *"generally of high altitude and climatic extremes"* (New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects 1985: 18). The South Island high country lies east of the main divide, west of the foothills and stretches between Marlborough and Southland, as illustrated in Figure 1.1. The high country comprises some 6 million hectares, of which approximately 3.4 million hectares is "pastoral land".

This land is held as Crown pastoral tenure, university endowment land, and areas of freehold tenure. Much of the non-pastoral land constitutes the conservation estate, including reserves, protected areas, stewardship land, and National Parks which are administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC) (Working Party 1994: 2).

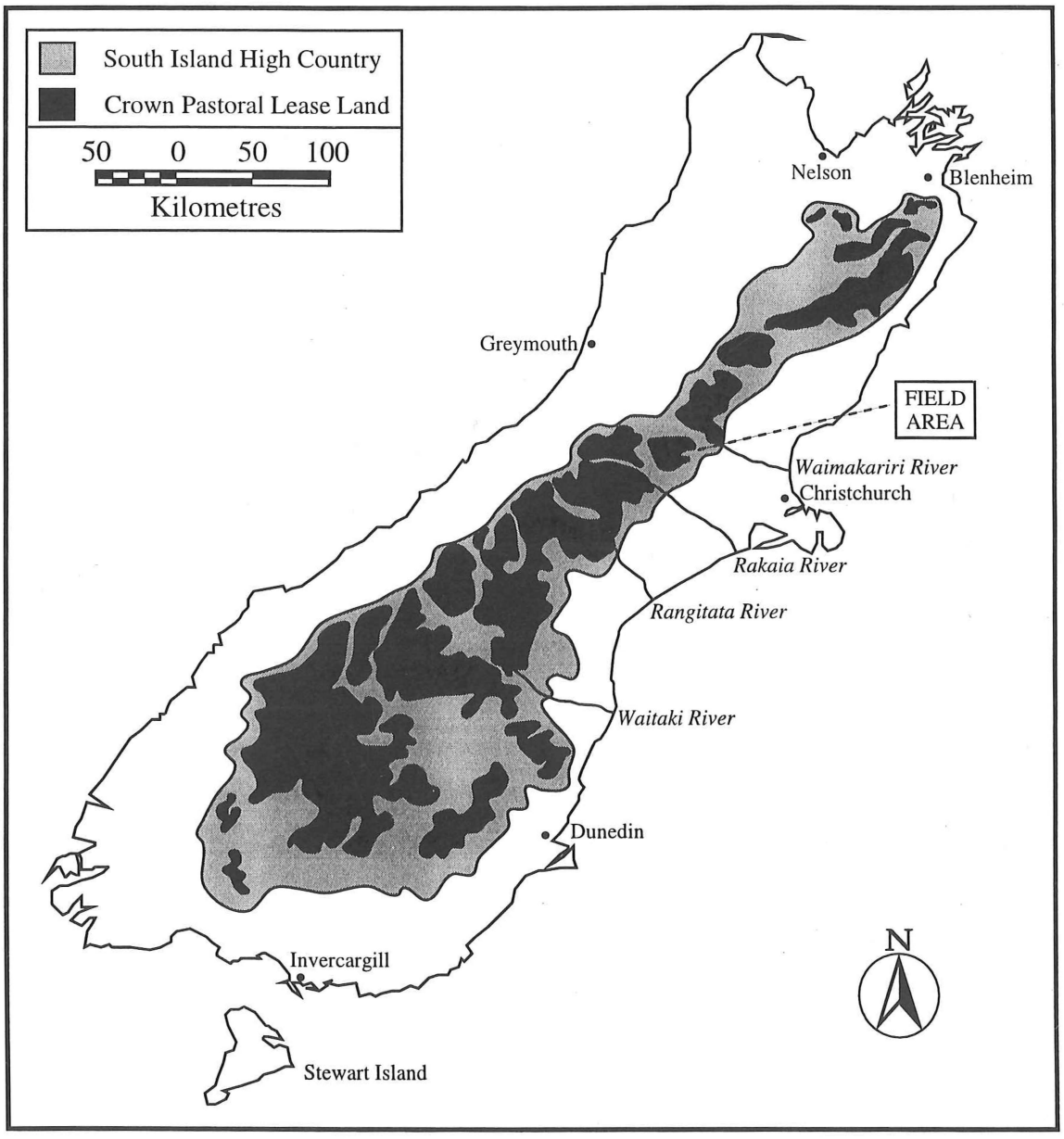


Figure 1.1: High Country Landscapes

"New Zealand's environment and natural heritage are its greatest assets" (New Zealand Tourism News, February 1995: 1). The high country tussock grasslands have been compared with the world's other famous natural grasslands such as the prairies of North America, the pampas of Argentina and the steppes of Russia (Hutching 1987: 14-15). The grasslands of the high country have evolved over thousands of years and form a valuable part of the nation's natural heritage. *"The plants and animals of the high country - tussock grasses, mountain totara, scree plants, kea, skinks, grasshoppers and giant weta, are as distinctive to New Zealand as are the kauri forests and the kiwi"* (RFBPS 1995: 3).

As a result of its landforms, soil and vegetation patterns and perceived "naturalness", high country environments are regarded as having a distinctive character, which is well documented (McCaskill 1973; O'Connor 1980; Ashdown and Lucas 1987). The high country is seen to be unique in that much of the lands are still in a natural, or semi-natural state. The pastoral farming system associated with the rangeland grasslands differs from those of most other agricultural areas in New Zealand, in that productivity has not been based upon an intensively used, highly modified ecosystem. As a result, high country landscapes retain significant environmental values (DOC 1994).

The South Island high country is often viewed as representing a "special kind of country" with common attributes including high relief, glacial sculpture, winter snows and the sharp gradient in precipitation from the forested interior to the more open tussock country. According to O'Connor (1980), high country farms traditionally differ from hill country properties because of their higher altitude, more extensive pastoral character, greater snow risk, and greater proportion of income derived from fine wool production.

Although the high country holds this range of signifying characteristics, it is important to recognise that there are major variations amongst different high country regions and communities, for example between the Upper Waimakariri Basin and the McKenzie Basin. Within high country landscapes there is also a diverse range of biophysical zones, land uses, landscapes of cultural significance, recreational opportunities, history, access, environmental values and perceptions.

"Only by the recognition of such variety in the complex unity of the tussock grasslands and mountain lands is there any likelihood of realism in planning for future management of these resources" (O'Connor 1980: 195).

1.3) High Country Land Tenure Reform

High country pastoral lands are administered according to the provisions of the Land Act 1948. The Land Act however, is now considered outdated in that it assumes pastoral farming as the principal land use in high country environments. The Land Act ignores other resource values and is now considered an impediment to facilitating sustainable land use, to mitigating high country environmental problems, and to resolving competing claims for the control and use of high country landscapes (Commissioner of Crown Lands 1994).

Although there are competing perceptions and uses of high country environments, there is a general consensus among interest groups that the high country regulatory framework is in need of change (Maturin 1994). Consistent with its policy to disengage the state from purely economic land use, the Government is willing to remove itself from ownership of the means of production in the high country. The National Government is presently involved (with other interest groups) in a lengthy process of reform, likely to result in the division of pastoral leasehold into freehold land (for production), conservation land (for preservation purposes), and in some cases retain an updated lease arrangement over the remainder (which combines production, through for example limited grazing, and conservation values). Alongside these reforms has been the introduction of the Crown Pastoral Lands Bill which will replace the Land Act 1948, changing the emphasis from "pastoral land use" to "sustainable land use". Legislative change will formalise the tenure review process and provide statutory recognition of land uses such as nature conservation. The land tenure reform process has important implications for all the interest groups who value high country landscapes.

Despite the benefits which statutory change and land tenure reform can provide for all the interested groups in high country landscapes (through for example more freehold land for farmers, and extensions to the conservation estate), there is a considerable degree of suspicion and apprehension amongst the different interests. As proposals to overhaul the land tenure system proceed, high country landscapes have become the setting for a number of conflicts fought between competing interests with different values. It is yet to be seen whether these different values can be reconciled within the ongoing reform process.

1.4) Research Objectives and Methodology

The aim of this thesis is to:

> *explain the basis for conflicts over existing uses of high country landscapes.*

This aim raises a number of underlying issues from which a range of key questions can be identified and addressed:

• What does the "high country" mean to different groups of people, in both symbolic and material senses?

• Why/ how has the extent and breadth of interests in high country landscapes increased?

• What is the political economic, environmental and cultural context from which the process of tenure reform has emerged?

• To what extent can the competing interests be clarified by examining them in more detail?

• How are conflicts manifested in particular parts of the high country?

• Can the high country be successfully utilised by a number of groups with different values?

- Can progress for the resolution of high country conflicts be made by recognising that there is in fact not one, but several high country landscapes?

The aims and objectives of this thesis are pursued through a qualitative approach; *"a set of tools developed to pursue the epistemological mandate of the philosophies of meaning"* (Smith 1994: 491). In other words, qualitative research involves a process of subjective understanding, rather than statistical description. Research is based upon direct observation, participation, interviewing, or more indirect analysis of literature, documents and of the landscape itself (ibid).

During my research I drew on a range of qualitative methods. This included semi-structured interviews with a range of individuals and representatives from groups who use or value high country landscapes. In addition, people's activities and interaction with the landscape were observed. This ranged from helping with mustering, attending a high country field day, and partaking in recreational activities in high country environments.

Much has been written about high country landscapes, particularly the environmental problems. It is only recently however, that several commentators have explored the nature of high country conflicts, in part due to the recent development and intensification of these contests. The advantages of studying the processes of change and conflict while the high country is in a state of reform are that the interest groups are more likely to be conversant in the issues contributing to the conflicts. Additionally their values and opinions are more readily available through various sources and events, including special meetings and "field days", through increased media coverage (evident on television, radio, newspapers and magazine articles), or through various publications disseminated by the groups in order to raise public awareness of high country issues. Representations of the issues involved in high country environments are portrayed in a variety of forms, ranging from television features, newspaper editorials, magazine articles, pamphlets and car bumper stickers.

It was often a difficult task to try and decode some of the meanings portrayed in the diversity of representations of high country conflicts. This raises questions of the positionality of the researcher, particularly regarding how the researcher treats the information gathered, and what is done with the product of the research. Barnes and Duncan (1992) note that writing about landscapes reveals as much about ourselves as it does about the landscapes represented. Therefore, to critically understand our representations, and also those of others, we must take into account the factors bearing upon an author, such as the social and historical context, and the institutional setting. Eyles and Smith (1988) note that the production of knowledge is a subjective process, influenced by the engagement of the researcher with what is being studied. Therefore if one cannot be objective because of self, then the aspects of self which influence the outcomes of an enquiry should be made explicit. Conradson (1994) chooses to reveal some of his cultural and ideological background with the objective that it will provide a more critical interpretation of his findings, and further understandings of the research material.

It is worth noting therefore, some of the social and cultural constructs which had a bearing on my research. Although I have always held an interest in environmental conflicts, my sympathies are however, somewhat mixed. I have been raised and educated in Christchurch, a major urban centre in New Zealand. In addition, I have also been brought up with regular interaction with rural life, particularly through family friends and relations. During holidays I have stayed and often worked on lowland farms throughout Canterbury, and my parents now farm in North Canterbury. This contact with rural society is pertinent as it has meant I have developed an empathy for farming concerns. It was particularly relevant when interviewing high country farmers, as they could relate to me not just as an "outsider", but also as an "insider" with some understanding of the issues affecting farming.

I have come to know the high country (and parts of my field area) directly through recreational pursuits in the region. However, it was not until after spending a year travelling overseas that I began to consciously appreciate some of the unique landscape values of the high country, in particular its recreational opportunities and its environmental distinctiveness, which are often assumed and taken for granted by many New Zealanders. It is through a combination of these constructs that I have come to understand more of the changes and conflicts in high country landscapes.

1.5) Structure

In summary, Chapter One has established the thesis objectives and outlined the background to high country conflicts, Chapter Two conceptualises the high country as a range of symbolic landscapes to which many different groups of New Zealanders have developed senses of attachment. This is important in introducing the idea that while some meanings are contested, many groups claim a stake (albeit often intangible) in the use and management of the high country because these landscapes are seen as icons of regional identity and nationhood. Chapter Three examines the manner with which different interests have utilised high country environments for material gain. Together, Chapters Two and Three are necessary for explaining how different symbolic and material interests claim a role in the series of conflicts for the control and use of high country landscapes. Leading on from this, Chapter Four details the political economic, environmental and cultural contexts to the high country conflicts. It is from within these contexts that a process has been designed to try and resolve the different contests.

Chapter Five introduces the research area. The Upper Waimakariri and Upper Rakaia high country is focused upon as the field area and region within which the thesis aims can be specifically pursued. Despite many differences between different regions of the high country, the field area was chosen because it displays a number of values and characteristics which are representative of the conflicts throughout the South Island high country. In particular, Chapter Six focuses on the controversy caused by Ngai Tahu attempts to regain a meaningful role in the management of high country landscapes.

Chapter Seven examines the conflicts caused by issues of foreign investment and ownership in high country lands. Chapter Eight investigates the inherent conflict between production and preservation in high country environments, and suggests that farmers and nature conservationists have fundamentally different perspectives of conservation. Chapter Nine summarises the major findings and draws together the underlying causes of high country conflicts.

In summary, this Chapter has introduced the background to high country conflicts and has set the major objectives for investigation. The following chapter elaborates and defines some of the underlying forces which contribute to an understanding of high country landscapes.

Chapter Two

The High Country ~ Symbolic Landscape(s)

2.1) Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline how different perceptions of high country landscapes affect land use. "Landscape values" provide a suitable mechanism for examining and explaining these different perceptions. Environmental perceptions are important as a means to understanding the way in which landscapes are managed. The high country is introduced and identified as a landscape of "symbolic importance". *"We regard all landscapes as symbolic, as expressions of cultural values, social behaviour, and individual actions worked upon particular localities over a space of time"* (Hugill in Meinig 1979: 4).

Understandings of the landscape are important for developing cultural identities, for different groups of people. High country landscapes play a significant role in New Zealanders' evolving cultural identity and conceptualisation of "place". *"High Country Landscapes - the very words evoke such a richness of feeling, such a diversity of images and ideas, that it is a major challenge to articulate their full depth of meaning"* (Swaffield and Lucas 1985:6). Although certain images of the high country stand as icons of nationhood, different interests attach different meanings to these landscape symbols. In contrast to the range of shared images, the high country also evokes a range of values which produce contested meanings. An understanding of high country symbolism is necessary in order to explain the current conflicts between different interests regarding the utilisation of this symbolic landscape.

2.2) Landscape, Place and Meanings

"Landscape is a way of seeing the world" (Cosgrove 1984: 13). For the purposes of this thesis, "landscape" is used in the broadest sense of environment, encompassing physical form and all the natural and cultural processes and interactions between them (Ashdown and Lucas 1987). Landscape is understood to be the character of the land as it is perceived and experienced by people.

Although landscape bears reference to the earth's surface, it involves more than merely a physical setting. Landscape is a creation of people's personalities, attitudes, knowledge and cultures. Landscape is common to everyone, but it is something that is created, interpreted and experienced in different ways. Landscape is not simply the world that people see, it is a social construction of that world. The New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA) states: *"The landscape reflects the cumulative effects of physical and cultural processes"* (1985 no.28: 18).

Landscapes can be understood as an expression of human values and practice. *"Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form"* (Lewis in Meinig 1979: 12). The visual features of a landscape provide evidence for the understanding of a local community or society. In a direct sense, visual characters provide tangible evidence of some level of human activity, evident for example by agricultural land use. In a more subtle sense, the same landscape reflects human values and intentions, for example production values.

Landscapes possess character that is derived from the association of their physical and built attributes, with the meanings that these have for those who are experiencing them (Relph 1976: 12-13). In other words, character and meaning are ascribed to landscapes through the purpose of experience. Landscapes are imbued with meanings that come from how (and why) they are known. Accordingly different landscape values (for example economic, ecological, cultural) arise from different uses of the land (such as farming, nature conservation, recreation).

Landscape is a term employed by a range of disciplines including artists, earth scientists, architects, planners, historians and geographers. Hence landscape carries multiple layers of meaning for a variety of groups and individuals with different values.

The plurality of the term "landscape" presents both opportunity and problems. As Swaffield and O'Connor (1986) point out, in its diversity landscape suggests a richness in meaning that provides opportunity for more profound understandings. In its ambiguity and ambivalence however, lies the possibility of confusion in practical application, particularly in land use planning and resource management.

Relph (1981: 58) agrees that landscape has a multiplicity of meanings and contends that making sense of them depends mostly on the context in which it is being used. Swaffield (1991: 13) uses three basic criteria to distinguish between different interpretations of landscape:

i) *plural meanings* - landscape is given different meanings by different people in different situations;

ii) *plurality in meaning* - landscape is given different meanings within the same situation;

iii) *ambiguity in meaning* - the meaning is confused, overlapping or unspecified, with the result that any specific use of landscape can be interpreted in diverse and potentially conflicting ways.

Duncan and Duncan (1988: 125) suggest that landscapes can be seen as *"transformations of social and political ideologies into a physical form"*. Duncan and Duncan criticise social scientists for taking a naive view of landscape, by accepting many of its ideological assumptions without questioning; for example that humanity holds authority over nature to make large scale modifications for material benefit. *"Consequently it (social science) has not placed the landscape concept within an adequate form of historical or social explanation"* (Relph in Cosgrove 1984: 15). By perceiving and characterising cultural landscapes as "natural", commentators fail to understand the sociohistorical and political processes through which the interpretation and meaning of landscape is produced, maintained and transformed.

Barthes (in Duncan and Duncan 1988: 117) illustrates how the meanings of landscape tend to be *"buried beneath layers of... ideological sediment"*, according to different cultural perceptions. Landscape plays an ideological role in the social process by supporting a set of ideas, values and unquestioned assumptions about the way a society is organised.

"If landscapes are texts which are read, interpreted according to an ingrained cultural framework of interpretation, if they are often read 'inattentively' at a practical or nondiscursive level, then they may be inculcating their readers with a set of notions about how a society is organised; and their readers may be largely unaware of this" (ibid: 123). Therefore, in order to understand the role played by landscape in the social process, it is necessary to deconstruct the multiple meanings of landscape by examining the sociohistorical and cultural context from which such meanings have evolved. *"It is clear that symbolic landscapes of the character and power we have been considering are not simply designed and marketed to an awaiting public. They arise out of deep cultural processes as a society adapts to new technologies, and opportunities and as it reformulates its basic concepts...* (Meinig 1979: 184).

The interpretation of landscape has become increasingly influenced by the global scale of production and consumption and the implications this holds for identity, meaning and place. McDowell (1994: 163) notes that there is growing recognition that knowledge is multiple and positional, *"that there are many ways of seeing and reading the landscape"*. We live in a postmodern context where global trends increasingly interact with locally based social practices to create and reveal new layers of meaning for landscapes and place.

Landscape provides the physical and visual form of place. Place is a concept which provides a unity between people and the land. Place is a particular part of a landscape which comes to be known through experiences. Meinig (1979) distinguishes between place and landscape by suggesting that place is influenced more in terms of direct experiences with a locality. Similarly, Relph (1976: 141) states that place is defined *"less by unique locations, landscape, and communities, than by the focusing of experiences and intentions onto particular settings"*.

Whereas we can talk about the Upper Waimakariri as a high country landscape, Cass is a particular place within the landscape. Places are important sources of identity, and are profound centres of social existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological links (ibid: 141-142). It is through the process of experience with a physical place that a sense of meaning is forged, for the meaning or perception of place is a property of human intentions and encounters.

Although place and landscape are ambiguous terms, they offer valuable insights for the examination of the high country. The South Island high country environments evoke images which are implicitly "place" oriented. They are distinctive landscapes with different values which are determined by a range of environmental perceptions. These different values and perceptions deserve further explanation.

Landscape values represent the range of attitudes people have toward the perceived environment. It is the combination of values which are ascribed to a landscape which defines its character. The landscape is utilised for a range of uses and purposes. High country landscapes are for example valued for a variety of reasons. For some people, the high country is important as a source of livelihood, for others it is important for recreational opportunities, spiritual well-being, tourism, or simply because it exists. Any one individual may hold overlapping values toward a landscape. However, where there are contested meanings between groups or individuals which compete for the use or control of a landscape, conflicts may develop.

Certain landscapes are perceived or depicted in a manner so as to portray powerful symbolic images. Therefore they come to be understood as particular types of places which hold certain characteristics, rather than as precise localities. *"No landscape exists merely as an accumulation of physical factors. Simply by identifying it we embed in it character, meaning and symbolism beyond its intrinsic shape and form"* (O'Regan in Swaffield 1991: 25). Daniels and Cosgrove (1988: 1) see the landscape as a cultural image, *"a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings"*. Therefore the landscape is a symbol that signifies a range of values and attitudes.

2.3) Shared Images of High Country Landscapes

"Every mature nation has its symbolic landscapes. They are part of the iconography of nationhood, part of the shared set of ideas and memories and feelings which bind a people together" (Meinig 1979: 164). Although there are a range of interest groups who hold fundamentally different values toward the high country, there are a range of meanings derived from high country landscapes which suggests that many of the images are shared. *"Despite many significant differences - geographic, social, economic - to most lay people the name high country strikes a common familiar chord in heart and mind. It has a distinctive ethos all of its own"* (Turner and Roberts 1983: 28).

These shared meanings explain why the high country is perceived as a common landscape to many New Zealanders which is of fundamental importance to the nation's identity. These shared images of the high country represent what Pepper (1984: 6) regarded as *"our unconscious mental habits"*. McDowell (1994) suggests that shared meanings are the result of symbols and social practices that are influenced in terms of place. So how is this manifested within the contexts of the high country landscapes?

Hasselmann (1989) regards the high country as a commons, in that it is a landscape common to the nation perceptually, and is generally perceived to be held in public ownership. The high country is *"to us as a nation, a part of everyone's backyard"* (ibid: 37). Almost every South Islander can view the mountains (weather permitting) from their homes, their office block, or from the back paddock. *"From all parts of the garden and grounds I can feast my eyes on the glorious chain of mountains"* (Lady Barker in McNaughton 1986:159). A large proportion of New Zealanders, particularly South Islanders, drive through the high country, visit, pursue recreational activities, and a smaller number actually live there. *"In this sense it is a landscape which is common to us all"* (Hasselmann 1989).

Although South Islanders may have more opportunity to experience the high country directly, the symbolic values of the landscape are held nationally. This is demonstrated for example, by the the use of shared high country symbols in national advertising. Furthermore, although the high country conflicts are locally based, they are contested nationally, by for example politicians, and non-governmental organisations such as Federated Farmers and the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (RFBPS). High country reform and conflicts receives national media coverage, through for example *North and South* magazine, *The Listener*, local newspapers (such as *The Press*, *Dominion*, *Otago Daily Times*) as well as national television coverage.

Stemming from Crown ownership of much of the high country, and reinforced by many of the images for which the high country landscapes are portrayed, many New Zealanders have an expectation to use (and hold a management stake in) the high country. *"The back of beyond belongs to all"* asserts Brian Turner, spokesperson for Public Access New Zealand (PANZ) (Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) 1994 no.118: 24). Turner believes that his experience in the outdoors (in particular, the landscapes of the high country) *"imbued in me an ardent sense of what New Zealand offered, and what was possible for a New Zealander"* (ibid). One runholder commented that for many people, the high country is special because they consider it be a *"God-given right as a New Zealander, to be able to traipse all over high country lands"*.

Fitzharris and Kearsley (1987) note that high country forests and peaks form a central part of the images conjured up by New Zealanders overseas when they think of home. To some extent the high country represents to New Zealanders, what the "Outback" is to Australians, or the "Frontier" was (and to an extent still is) to Americans; a place of challenge and mystique, and an integral component of national identity (Fitzharris and Kearsley 1987: 198 - 199). *"People go to challenge and test themselves and to be challenged. To invite... feelings that begin... to feel like reverence... there is always the thought that one may see things or experience events that will linger a lifetime... Or, if not that, merely to look and absorb some of the loveliest country anywhere"* (Turner and Roberts 1983: 9).

Dominy (1993a: 318-319) characterises this sentiment as the *"High Country Mystique"*, in which New Zealand's *"primeval landscape"* is accepted as a *"source of religiosity and emerging cultural identity"*. Hasselmann (1989: 52) contends the high country encapsulates *"our needs for an understanding of our kinship with the land"* which *"embodies our symbolism as a nation"*. The high country is frequently associated with concepts of spiritual divinity: *"The wind that blows forever pure down from tussock ranges"* (Baxter in Roberts and Turner 1983: 83); *"The high hills and mountains which are our nearest things to shrines in this country"* (Roberts and Turner 1983: 66); *"...the majestic remains of virgin bush, forming the passage from flat pastoral charm to the heroic majesty of the hills"* (Reischek in Roberts and Turner 1983: 131).

Associated with this high country mystique is an image of stoic "Kiwi" men and women, who are hardened by the harsh climate and relative isolation. Although transport and communication improvements have meant high country farmers are not as isolated as they once were (particularly from the services and facilities available in semi-rural and urban centres), they still tend to be regarded as a remote community. In fact there are still several properties which have limited electricity or are easily isolated as a result of extreme climatic events. A recent *Press* article (June 22, 1995) for example, highlights a family in the Inland Kaikoura Range whose *"only link with civilisation"* is by aeroplane (weather permitting) or a four-wheel-drive track, which is only usable in the summer months.

Like the land and climate they live in, high country farmers are stereotypically seen as austere and uncompromising, inspired only by a love for their habitat. *"The craggy ruggedness of the land has left its mark on the people who live in it. They have blended hard work, toughness, improvisation and charm into an amalgam that identifies with the Kiwi character"* (Television New Zealand (TVNZ) Publishing 1987: 17). In a recent television programme which detailed a Canterbury high country muster, the journalist observed that: *"It is rugged country here, and these are rugged men. They don't take the scenery for granted, it inspires them"* (TVNZ May 4, 1995).

Roberts and Turner (1983: 10) describe living in the high country as *"hard but healthy, a life that is apt to breed tough characters"* for which they are perceived to be admired. Fitzharris and Kearsley (1987: 201) contend that the *"myth of the ruggedly honest countryman pervades the iconology of modern Western society in antithesis to the shallow and sophisticated, almost effete, urbanite"*. Many New Zealanders seem to like to associate themselves with the images the high country conjures up; *"A symbol of what I see as a rather wistful self image as a nation of hard bitten jokers and wide open spaces ... we do see ourselves as rugged individualists in bush shirts in a country of rugged peaks* (Woolaston 1987: 51).

The hardy image of high country farmers is a product of the pioneering legacy forged by the runholders' forbears. The European settlers who elected to farm in the high country in the 1850s were forced to endure many hardships compared to contemporary standards. Living conditions (including heating and accommodation) were often uncomfortable and the isolation meant sufferances (including a lack of supplies and facilities) had to be tolerated for lengthy periods. Yet many took the relative hardships for granted and continued to toil in order to achieve a degree of security, even prosperity. Something of a high country aristocracy developed (and is still perceived to endure) with the original families handing on their estates to the next generation. Despite modernisation (involving the introduction of electricity, telecommunications, four-wheel-drive vehicles, helicopters and improved farming knowledge), many of the hardy images of high country people persist (often for good reason) and contribute to the regions symbolic conceptualisation.

Because agriculture and the New Zealand countryside are still fundamental components in the New Zealand economy, Perry (1994: 49) argues that New Zealanders tend to interpret rural images differently from societies whose wealth does not rely upon agriculture as much, *"and whose built environments display a more complete colonisation of the natural world. Under such conditions, the claim that 'rural New Zealand' somehow stands for national culture is therefore not wholly without plausibility"*. Cloke (1992a: 269) states that rural areas have been used as *"a repository of ideological virtue in counterpoint to other more problematic locales"*, such as congested urban areas.

Dominy (1993b) contends that within the context of contemporary nationalism, New Zealanders look to the high country as an image of nationhood and a symbol of resistance to modernisation. *"New Zealanders define themselves in terms of their geographical separation and pastoral isolation from the conflicts of modernism"* (Dominy 1993a: 321). Amidst a global context of increasing capitalist development (associated with an increase in social inequalities), the rural landscape has been characterised as offering natural beauty, good health, and a high quality of life. Rural communities are seen to be close-knit, safe and friendly, where wholesome traditional values are upheld. For many people the high country is perceived to encapsulate these symbols of a rural utopia.

Since European settlers arrived in New Zealand, the South Island high country has been associated with a variety of romantic myths and images which continue to pervade how New Zealanders perceive themselves. In this context, myth refers not simply to a fictional narrative, but to a statement of belief by society about ourselves and the world. The high country is generally portrayed in such a manner (through for example advertising, literature, painting, television programmes) that its role as a landscape of national significance is embellished. Most representations of the high country accept many of the images without questioning, and thereby perpetuate the popular symbolic values. *"Rather than seeking to expose what lies behind the well publicized mystique of the high country, most popular representations buy into the iconography, into those very symbols, thereby pointing to continuous themes and perpetuating the mystique"* (Dominy 1993a: 328).

"To large numbers of people, especially those who live in the South Island, mention the words "high country" and you arouse feelings which go right to the heart of their sense of identity, their sense of what is uniquely New Zealand" (RFBPS November 1994: 2). The shared meanings of the high country landscapes represent a set of symbolic images which have been naturalised and largely accepted without questioning. These images of the high country have evolved overtime. As can be seen from the range of historical and cultural materials which depict the high country, the symbolic values of the high country have been an important theme in the development of a New Zealand identity.

Representations of the high country reflect a universal reading which is consistent with the suppositions of modernism. Just as many New Zealanders like to define themselves in terms of their geographical isolation and an intransigence to modern development (and the social problems it is seen to cause), they also accept a modernist view of the world. Underlying the differences in high country symbolic images there are seen to be a number of integrative elements based around the development of a national identity. This modernist reading allows high country environments to be conceptualised as a landscape which is common to us all. More recently these shared images justify the means by which a range of interests claim a "stake" in the management of high country landscapes, because they are seen to be a fundamental component of nationhood for all New Zealanders. The basis for high country conflicts is thereby derived from the fact that these landscapes are regarded as national symbols in which many groups claim an interest.

2.4) Art, Literature and Advertising

Representations of high country environments tend to create and reinforce the shared images for which the landscape is valued. Idyllic representations of South Island high country life are manifested in a variety of genres, including literature, poetry, paintings, photography, as well as the media. Dominy (1993a; 1993b) notes that high country symbolism is accepted and portrayed by both indigenous and exogenous authors, as well as high country residents and non-residents.

High country iconography *"strikes powerful chords in the soul of Pakeha New Zealand"* (Fitzharris and Kearsley 1987: 198). This symbolism is displayed in the vast array of books stacked upon coffee tables, and in the paintings and prints which adorn many rooms throughout New Zealand, or even more explicitly, upon the items (including travel bags, chocolates, postcards, clothing, calendars, facial cleanses and souvenirs) found for sale in tourist shops. These symbols associate the high country, with its rugged landscape, flowing rivers, mountain ranges, "clean and green environment", and a distinct breed of hardy men and women who are perceived to thrive in these tussock clad mountains.

As a landscape of *"stability, permanence and uncomplicated honesty"* (Roberts and Turner 1983: 36), the high country has been a symbol for some of New Zealand's most renowned artists (such as Rita Angus, Colin McCahon, Bill Sutton and Austen Deans), and writers (including Charles Brasch, Morgan Holcroft, James K. Baxter and Janet Frame. Consider these images, conveyed from some other New Zealand based authors.

"It was a monotonous life (high country farming), *but it was very healthy... The country was the grandest that can be imagined. How often have I sat on the mountain side and watched the waving downs... all seen as through the wrong end of a telescope, so clear and brilliant was the air, or as upon a colossal model or map spread out beneath me... Oh wonderful!, wonderful, so lonely and so solemn...* (Butler 1872:26)

"I watch them (the Southern Alps) *under all their changes of tint, and find each new phase the most beautiful. In the very early morning I have often stood shivering at my window to see the noble outline gradually assuming shape"* (Lady Barker in McNaughton 1986:159);

"The most marked impression to emerge from a survey of Pakeha literature in its relation with landscape is that the high country is seen by almost all writers as a landscape of exceptional importance, a unique place, often problematic and troubling, but always wielding great aesthetic, emotional and spiritual power" (Eldred Grigg 1993: 8).

Sinclair (1986: 6) suggests that *"it is though we* (New Zealanders) *have been imprinted by images of our land"*. Charles Brasch (in Dominy 1993b: 568) reinforces this sentiment through poetry: *"the country...* (became) *an interior landscape of my mind... the shapes, textures, scents, sounds of all its landscape grew into me and grew with me"*. The assertion of nationalism in literature has been an ongoing theme in the emergence of a New Zealand identity. The (high country) landscapes have been a consistent source of literary inspiration: *"...it's just dawned on me that I'm a New Zealander, and surely the legends of the mountains, rivers and people that we see about us should mean more to us than the legends of any other country on earth"* (Hyde in McNaughton 1986: 9).

In the contemporary world, symbolic associations are used to serve material ends. *"In the social formations of western capitalism, consumption has become linked with desires, through the use of signs and symbols in selling products to the majority of consumers"* (Bocock 1993: 3). Many of the symbols of the high country are adopted and exploited by the advertising industry. Favourable images of the high country are associated with a diverse range of consumer goods and services including cosmetics, chocolate, vehicles, alcohol, financial institutions, clothing, butter and petrol. Although these products often have little or no relationship with the high country, they are conveyed as such, in order to associate themselves with a landscape which is "common to us all". Because the high country represents a landscape which is considered to be integral to the identity of New Zealanders, advertisers expect that products associated with high country images will be well supported by consumers. At one level this is clearly exemplified by party political broadcasts which often include panoramic sweeps over high country scenes.

Toyota advertisements are one of the most obvious illustrations where a range of high country images are exploited in order to market a product. Toyota advertisements (on television and in newspapers/ magazines) set vehicles amidst scenic shots of the high country landscape (Note Plate 2.1). It is ironic that a Japanese based company's slogan in New Zealand is "Welcome to Our World", when it is clearly exploiting images which are perceived to be unique to New Zealand. Toyota advertisements set Barry Crump (who is portrayed as the archetypal Kiwi farmer/ bushman) in a Toyota Landcruiser racing through high country terrain.

Plate 2.1: High Country Landscape Association - Toyota Advertising
(Source: Toyota New Zealand Limited 1995)

"Recreational. Environmental. Adventurous. Does this sound like you? Why not introduce yourself to the landscape in a new way? Make yourself at home on the range - the Toyota range" (Toyota NZ Ltd 1995: 20). By drawing on the symbolic values of the high country, Toyota advertisements attempt to appeal to a wide audience and exploit the images of the high country which are often taken for granted by potential consumers. For example, the consumer is left to discern there is a link between the ruggedness of the landscape with the vehicle.

Jeff Worsnop (pers. comm. 1995) from the advertising agency Colenso Communications, conceded that the decision to set Toyota vehicles in the high country was an advertising decision, and not one made by Toyota itself. Mr Worsnop felt that the high country was an attractive and photogenic landscape which portrayed the vehicles to good effect. He felt it was important to set the vehicles amidst wide open spaces of the high country, because the landscape did not interfere with the product itself.

Mr Worsnop suggested that as the high country is perceived to be one of New Zealand's most photogenic landscapes, its popularity for advertising will continue to grow the more it is photographed for advertising purposes.

2.5) Contested Meanings

The high country symbolises a range of shared meanings which are interpreted to contribute a common thread to the identity of New Zealand. These shared meanings of the high country are however, not all-pervasive. For certain groups, the high country landscape constitutes a number of contested values and meanings relevant to their relationship within society and the environment. Duncan and Duncan (1988: 125) state that *"because landscapes are one of the most pervasive, taken-for-granted texts about social organization, denaturalization is one of the most important tasks we can perform".*

A recent feature of social sciences has been the emergence of a postmodernist movement which is characterised by a growing scepticism about grand theories of social meaning. Postmodernism contests modernist assumptions that the world can be understood by a number of universal tendencies and commonalities. Instead the world is seen as a plurality of spaces, of differences rather than similarities, of micronarratives rather than metanarratives (Martin 1994). *"Postmodernism may be thought of as an epoch, an historic era in which changes in culture and philosophy are themselves located in the evolution of a global economy and geopolitics"* (Johnston, Gregory and Smith 1994: 466). Amidst the forces of globalisation, universal cultural elements proliferate and there are growing social expressions of difference. High country cultural images have developed as icons of increasing significance to different groups of New Zealanders seeking to define their identity.

The differences of high country landscapes can be considered from this postmodernist perspective. Postmodernist thinking allows an investigation of the underlying assumptions and beliefs held by different groups within society. An examination of these beliefs provides us with valuable understandings for the context(s) of conflict(s).

"The task of explanation becomes one of discourse analysis and deconstruction, of revealing the discursive structures, ideological beliefs and textual strategies that we use, consciously or unconsciously, to establish the content and persuasiveness of our different knowledge claims" (Martin 1994). Race, gender and urban/ rural differences provide a suitable context for deconstructing some of the high country's interpretations and exploring the manner with which different social groups ascribe contested meanings to high country landscapes.

— Maori Values

Maori contest the set of shared meanings and values commonly ascribed to the high country landscape by many Pakeha. Like Pakeha however, for many Maori the high country is a landscape of fundamental importance for their identity and spiritual well-being.

For Maoridom, the South Island high country comprises an integral part of their views of creation. According to Maori mythology, the South Island is a waka (canoe) plunging through the waters of the South Pacific. The Southern Alps of Aotearoa represent the children of Rangi (Sky Father), who were turned to stone when their canoe (Te Waka o Aoraki) overturned in a storm whilst visiting their father's wife Papa (Earth Mother). *"They are the tupuna, the 'old ones' revered ancestors adorned in wonderful white cloaks... some hold their heads high while others slump with exhaustion from the struggle with the storm tides"* (RFBPS August 1995: 17). The eldest child (Aoraki) formed the highest peak in the land and is now known as Maunga Aoraki (Mt Cook).

The descendants of Aoraki set about shaping and "beautifying" the land by digging lakes in the high country and cloaking the landscape in bush. Today the high country remains of significance to Maori as it bears important historical links (including burial sites), and is a place of natural beauty and *mauri* (life) which is interwoven with the local iwi's identity. For example, Ngai Tahu (who claim tribal authority over much of the South Island) recognise Aoraki as a key link with their *whakapapa* (ancestors), from which they derive their identity and relationship with the land (Tau 1988). Maori recognise the natural world as kin, for people and nature are seen to be descendants of Rangi and Papa. For Maori, the landscape is a living force holding *mauri* and *wairua* (spirit).

Recently, in a claim before the Waitangi Tribunal, Ngai Tahu sought compensation for violations of the Treaty of Waitangi 1840, and of the purchase of Ngai Tahu lands. As part of the claim, Ngai Tahu sought that high country pastoral land in Crown ownership be returned to Ngai Tahu title. Ownership of high country land was identified by Ngai Tahu as as a means to regain mana (prestige and authority) over an area of land of cultural and spiritual importance. Although Ngai Tahu have thus far, been unsuccessful in regaining ownership of the high country, their claim represents a significant digression from the set of shared meanings many Pakeha ascribe to the high country landscape, which are commonly portrayed as universal readings. Based from their different sociohistorical and cultural background, many Maori hold a different perspective of the high country. This is exemplified through the Ngai Tahu claim which represents an attempt to *"resist inclusion in a static genericised discourse"* (Dominy 1993b: 570). In a postmodern world, the Ngai Tahu claim reflects an attempt to have their values and sense of place acknowledged. The implications of Ngai Tahu's claim to the high country are examined more specifically in Chapter Eight.

— Gender

"In New Zealand the male stereotype, rather than the female, has been unusually influential upon the lives of both men and women - it has become identified with the process of national identification. In the public perception they (males) *'personify' the New Zealander"* (Phillips 1987: vii). In *A Man's Country?,* Jock Phillips investigates the image of the Pakeha male: *"a rugged practical bloke - fixes anything, strong and tough, keeps his emotions to himself, usually scornful of women. Yet at heart a decent bloke, loyal to his mates..."* (ibid: 324). This stereotypical depiction of the "Kiwi bloke" is encapsulated by much of the imagery associated with the high country. The high country is the setting for the quintessential New Zealand male character, "blokes" like Barry Crump. There is a distinct gender imbalance associated with high country imagery.

Whereas there are ample references to the men of the high country, to those *"Kingdoms in the Hills"* (McLeod 1972), images of high country women are not so readily available; exemplified by this poem:

> *To be young fit and keen, alone*
> *in a mountain world with only the*
> *skyline beyond; what a life for a man!*
>
> (Reg Winn in McLeod 1972: iii).

Dominy (1993a) notes that most representations of high country families reinforce stereotypes of a pioneer world of maleness and traditional gender roles. Turner and Roberts (1983: 18) acknowledge this gender imbalance in representations of high country men and women. They proceed however, to make their own generalisations of high country women: *"Words such as loyal, supportive, hard working, courageous, stoical, adaptable, and so on, spring to mind"*. Turner even goes as far to say that *"many women in the high country lead very active lives involving a considerable amount of work"* (ibid). As if dealing with something peculiar, or even unique, McLeod (1972) devotes an entire chapter to the women of the high country; McLeod titles the chapter "Petticoat Invasion".

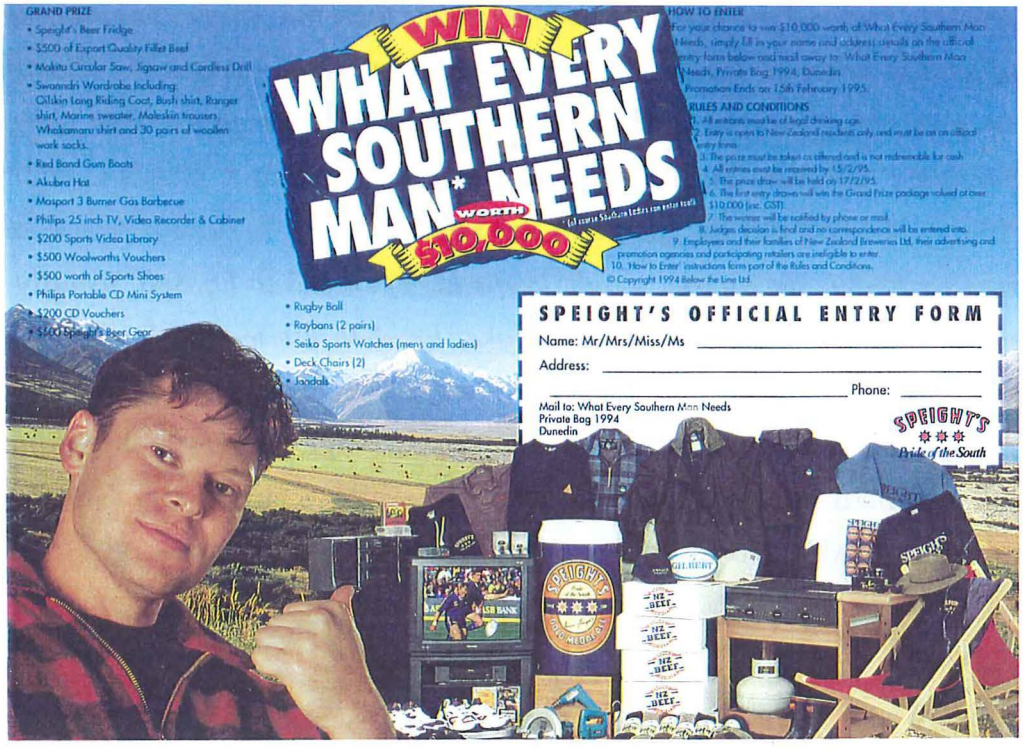


Plate 2.2: High Country Images - Malecentric Advertising

(Source: New Zealand Breweries Limited 1995)

The malecentric imagery of the high country is manifested through advertisements such as Speights. The beer brand Speights represents another example where high country imagery is employed by advertisers to market their product. The Speights advertisements represent a reading of the high country which portrays gender bias. Speights is marketed as the "Southern Man's Beer" and the "Pride of the South". In so doing, it draws on the notion of the stoic Pakeha male. In a recent Speights promotion (Note Plate 2.2) consumers have the opportunity to buy Speights and win "What Every Southern Man Needs", including gumboots, bushshirts, rugby balls, barbecues, and a power saw and drill. On the competition form a bush shirt clad male is set amidst some Speights regalia and high country farmland with Mt Cook in the background. Speights advertisements are an illustration of male-centric imagery which is designed to appeal to that section of the population for whom the notion of the rugged Southern man is particularly attractive.

— Rural/ Urban Differences

Rural and urban New Zealanders attach different meanings to images of the landscape. There is a popular sentiment held by many New Zealanders that the high country should not be owned, nor inhabited by anyone. In particular, many urban based environmental groups argue that nobody should have the right to monopolise a national symbol. Whereas many urban people hold a sense of visual ownership of the high country, people who live in the high country assert their rights and values from actually living and working there. People who live in rural areas tend to be influenced more in terms of having to gain a livelihood from the land. Like Ngai Tahu, Dominy (1993b: 570) argues that high country people *"resist the reification of culture as continuous tradition and assert the dynamic nature of their being in a postmodern world where cultural identity construction is richly nuanced, fluid and situationally specific.*

Dominy (ibid) notes that Pakeha symbolic values are assumed, and that rural Pakeha ideology is seen by urbanites to be primarily materialistic, individualistic and homogeneous. Rural and urban Pakehas tend not to elaborate their lives in symbolic terms, rather their symbolic values tend to be taken for granted. The differences between urban and rural perceptions of the high country landscape are explored more specifically in Chapter Six.

2.6) Summary

There are many ways of seeing and reading landscapes. Although the landscape captivates a range of powerful symbols which are readily accepted and contribute to the high country's conceptualisation as a national icon, for some groups the high country holds contested meanings. Although it is convenient to universalise about how people interpret the high country landscape, generalities are too simplistic. There is no unified truth about the high country, no one discourse.

In a postmodern era, the different values for high country landscapes have become more conspicuous, and the contests between them have become more discernible. The symbolic images for which the landscapes of the high country are valued, have become the source of conflicts as various groups look to derive benefits from the control of these key cultural images and identities. A postmodernist interpretation involves a partial reading of the shared images of the high country landscapes. Shared images must be understood if they are to be contested. Because they are known however, they need not be accepted or assumed. In a postmodern world social meanings are denaturalised, and the inherent differences and multiplicity of interests for landscapes are stressed. Shared meanings of landscape are historically and culturally contextualised, and as well they are sometimes gender specific, distinct from Maori readings, and different for the people who actually live in the high country.

Dominy (1993b: 569) acknowledges the perceptual differences of the high country as summarised in Figure 2.3: *"Landscape emerges as a multivocal symbol within the New Zealand context, carrying different meanings to different constituencies both within and outside of the high country, and carrying different and multiple meanings to the same population at different times".*

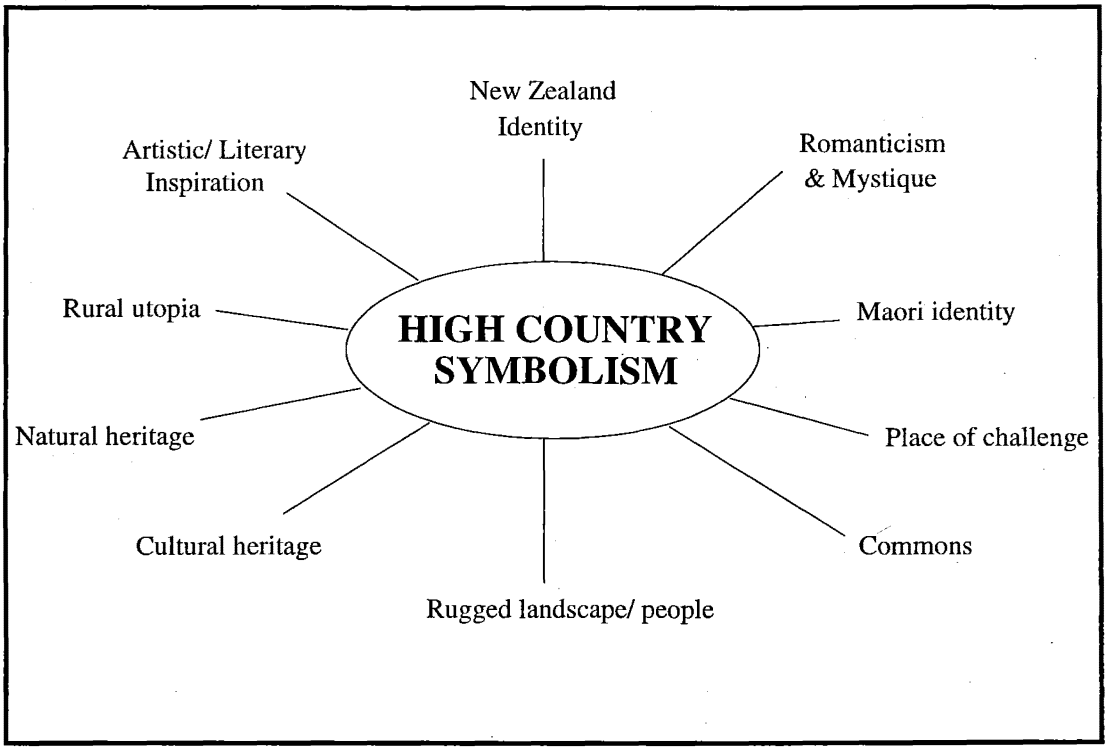


Figure 2.1: Shared and Contested Images of High Country Landscapes

Chapter Three

The High Country ~ Material Landscape(s)

3.1) Introduction

The high country means many different things to different groups of people. For some, it is not only a source of symbolic fulfilment, but also a landscape in which economic gain can be produced. The purpose of this chapter is to outline how the high country has been utilised for material purposes. Since European settlement, agricultural production has been the principal economic activity throughout New Zealand. The tussock grasslands of the high country have been valued primarily in terms of their worth for wool production. However, a change in the international and national political economic context has more recently been associated with the development of a range of new commercial land use values in the high country. Consequently, the high country is now the setting for a variety of productive land uses including agriculture, horticulture, tourism and commercial recreation.

3.2) European Settlement and the Imposition of Pakeha Values

Pawson (1987) argues that in order to survive and prosper, many early European immigrants to New Zealand saw their task to be the taming of wilderness, and the civilising of its indigenous inhabitants. British governance over New Zealand was established in 1840 with the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, by representatives of Queen Victoria and indigenous Maori *iwi*. In exchange for accepting British governance, Maori expected the Treaty to guarantee them ownership and control of their resources, and equal economic and political rights with European settlers.

The legitimation of colonial rule was followed up by extensive Crown purchases of Maori land. By 1860, most of the South Island had been bought from Ngai Tahu in a series of controversial agreements which left many Maori feeling dispossessed and deprived (Evison 1987; Waitangi Tribunal 1991).

Maori occupation in the South Island high country is thought to date back almost one thousand years (Brailsford 1984). Various high country sites show evidence of the region being used for *mahinga kai* (resource gathering sites), including Wanaka, Tekapo and Lake Coleridge (Evison 1987, Tau et al. 1990). Food and resources were collected seasonally, such as moa, eels and trout. Tussock grasses were used to make sandals, clothing and bags. The South Island high country was passed through by trading parties between the east and west coast, who exchanged resources including the prized *pounamu*, found in Poutini (West Coast). Considered a gift from the Gods, *pounamu* was not only of spiritual value, but also of great material worth. *Pounamu* was carefully fashioned to make a range of implements including axes and *mere* (clubs), as well as jewellery (Brailsford 1984). Maori are thought to be responsible for large fires, spread, both accidentally and intentionally, for the purpose of capturing moa (Molloy 1963; Cumberland 1981). These fires destroyed much of the forest on the eastern rangelands which were replaced by tussock grasslands.

British governance and Pakeha settlement paved the way for the imposition of Western capitalist values. Western perceptions of the environment are influenced by the productive use that people can utilise from it. The landscape is viewed as a resource worth exploiting for material gain. From the classical economic perspective, land is only beautiful if it is (financially) fruitful (Murton 1979: 32). Europeans brought to New Zealand the notion of land as a commodity, capable of being divided, possessed and traded. Western society is based upon the premise that humanity has authority over nature which enables people to make large scale modifications to the natural environment for personal and corporate profit (Durie 1987: 19). Settlers transformed the landscape in order to gain material benefit, and make it more like their countries of origin, usually Britain.

In *"A First Year in Canterbury Settlement"*, Samuel Butler (1863: 47) expresses the desire for evidence of human habitation in the landscape: *"...we were shortly in scenery of true Alpine nature - very, very grand. It wanted, however, a chalet or two, or some sign of human handiwork in the foreground; as it was, the scene was too savage."*

Although some settlers valued their new country for its environmental distinctiveness, the majority longed to transform New Zealand into the Britain of the South Pacific. Hasselmann (1989: 24) suggests that settlers were prepared to exploit nature because they had not developed any spiritual ties to their new environment, they held no concept of "place". Therefore they used the environment to procure economic gains and the comforts of their former home.

Attempts were made by settlers to replace landscape features with settings with which they were more familiar, particularly pastoral and garden scenes. In the high country, grand homesteads were constructed and surrounded by replicas of English gardens. In order *"to make New Zealand a home away from Home"* (McNaughton 1986: 8), exotic plantations were established around the houses to shield the settlers from what was often perceived to be a savage landscape. Charles Hursthouse summation of the New Zealand landscape in 1857 captures this sentiment: *"The natural scenery of New Zealand is both bold and beautiful; though to an English eye, accustomed to trim fields, clipped hedges, and to the smooth-rolled, finished look of every acre in England, it would frequently appear more bold than beautiful... New Zealand is much in the state that Britain was when Caesar landed; ... gloomy forest and repulsive rugged waste... New Zealand is a... fertile cultivable country; where plough sickle and mill would singularly enrich and brighten the landscape"* (in McNaughton 1986: 7).

Early pastoralists viewed the land according to its productive value, in terms of its capacity to carry sheep. Samuel Butler (1863: 65-66) articulates this sentiment: *"I am forgetting myself into admiring a mountain which is of no use for sheep. This is wrong. A mountain here is only beautiful if it has good grass on it. Scenery is not scenery - it is 'country', subaudita voce 'sheep'".*

3.3) Pastoral Development

When organised colonisation began in New Zealand, the aim was to develop intensive agricultural settlements, based upon Wakefield's principles of systematic colonisation. Edward Gibbon Wakefield was responsible for the formation of the New Zealand Company, which set out to establish antipodean replicas of English society based upon intensive agriculture, and discourage what were perceived as disorderly squatter settlements, as evident in Australia (Gresham 1978: 23). *"In Wakefield's Utopia, land policy would control the expansion of the frontier and regulate class relationships"* (Sinclair in O'Connor and Kerr 1978: 104). Land was made available by the settlement companies at a relatively high price in order to attract a capitalist class, whose funds from land purchases would provide for the establishment of church and educational institutions, public works, and further immigration (Gresham 1978).

YEAR	LAND SOLD OR GRANTED	LAND HELD UNDER PASTURAGE LICENCE
1852	70,000	1,000,000
1856	3,000,000	5,000,000
1866	8,000,000	15,574,420
1868	9,000,000	14,802,454
1877	13,122,753	13,520,339

Table 3.1: Uptake of Land Under Colonial Land Disposal Laws 1852 - 1877 (Acres)

(Source: Ackroyd 1993: 9)

Commercial opportunities meant that demand for the uptake of land was high (Note Table 3.1). Local pressure for pasturage rights increased, particularly following the arrival of pastoralists from Australia in the 1850s who had suffered from drought. The demand for pasturage rights, coupled with provincial governments' urgent need for development finance, brought about a liberalisation in the issuing of depasturage licences. Large estates were taken up by colonial capitalists who turned to extensive pastoralism as a profitable form for investment.

Investors were attracted to land outside the lowland settlement blocks because Crown licences were generally cheaper. The readily accessible areas were soon taken up in grazing blocks and the demand for land spread into more remote regions. *"The open country of the Canterbury and Otago Plains beckoned to sheep and sheepman as a way by which capitalist and colonising company alike could make a new settlement pay its way"* (O'Connor and Kerr 1978: 104).

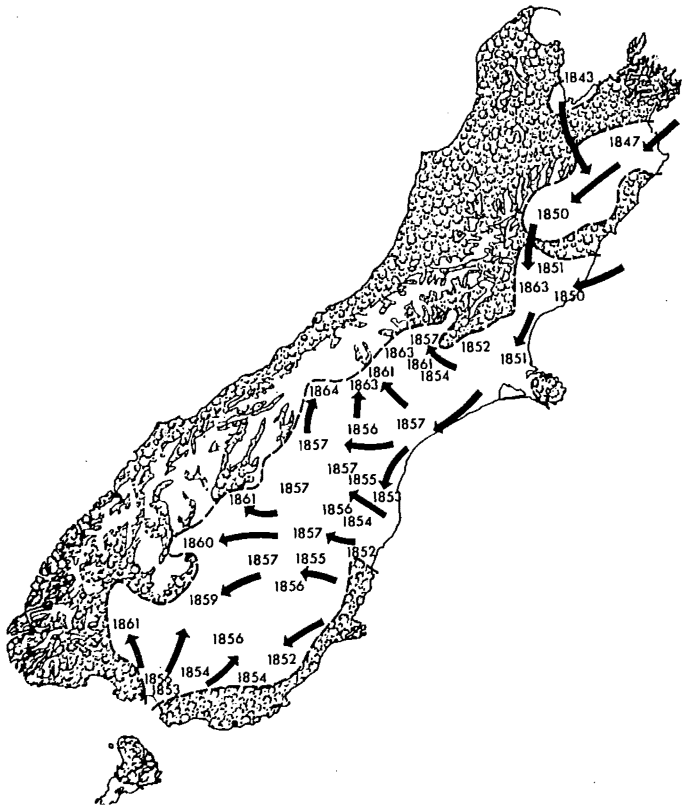


Figure 3.1: Pastoral Occupation of the South Island

(Source: O'Connor and Kerr 1978: 105)

With limited domestic demand for meat and crops, and no refrigeration, wool proved to be a commodity favoured by investors. Furthermore, during this period the income from wool far exceeded the income that could be earned from agriculture (Gardner 1981).

The production of wool developed as a key market which could support a growing export industry, particularly for the textile manufacturers in Britain. Although settlement of New Zealand had been modelled upon intensive agricultural communities, and despite government attempts to limit extensive pastoralism through land pricing and leasehold regulations, the Wakefield settlements had little option but to *"climb...on the sheep's backs"* (O'Connor 1993: 125).

3.4) High Country - Agricultural Expansion

Demand for rural acreage pushed Southern pastoralists further inland in order to find land suitable for grazing. In the South Island high country, settlers discovered expanses of tussock grasslands considered appropriate for producing wool. By 1855 all the Canterbury plains and hills were occupied, and by 1865 almost the whole of Marlborough, Canterbury, Otago and Southland up to the "Snowy Mountains" were included in pastoral runs (Acland 1951) (Refer Figure 3.1).

The dissolution of Provincial Government's in 1876, provided the national government with an opportunity to gain control over pastoral land and make it available for "orderly" settlement. A major objective for central government was to consolidate the numerous regulations governing the administration of land which had developed under the provincial system. Legislators were influenced by new economic theories that favoured the State retaining ownership of the land, and using it for the benefit of the whole community (Ackroyd 1993: 16). In 1877 the Land Act was passed which set the general pattern for pastoral licence tenure until 1948. The Land Act 1877 was designed to encourage more intensive agricultural development and provide farming opportunities for settlers with limited capital (Blake et al 1983). The Act limited the term of a pastoral licence to ten years, after which it was put up for auction. At auction, rent was set by the highest bid and the runholders right to freehold was restricted to 320 acres.

The advent of refrigeration in 1882 prompted more intensive farming development and agriculture began to displace pastoralism on the lowlands. As demand for land increased, opportunities to control large areas of land were constrained by legislation and rising land prices. As farm technology developed, particularly through the introduction of exotic pastures and fencing wire, the plains and hill country underwent more intensive development. The high country however, remained the domain of extensive runholders. Unsuccessful forays into cropping in the Canterbury high country supported the continuance of wool production and the preservation of large estates (O'Connor 1981). The nature of the high country environment necessitated that for pastoralism to be economically profitable, it had to be carried out over extensive land holdings. In the high country intensive agriculture was simply not economically viable.

Apart from extensive pastoralism, the high country was seen to have few other commercial or non-commercial land uses. As a result of the nature of the environment, high country pastoralism came to be distinguished from pastoralism in the lowlands. Although the Liberal government went about "bursting up the great estates" in order to provide smallholdings for land hungry settlers, the high country was largely exempt from the land reforms of the 1890s (Gresham 1978; Ackroyd 1993). O'Connor and Kerr (1978: 105) note that *"there was little pressure in the mountains for change of farming from extensive pastoralism. Here people struggled for a share of the pastoral cake in a mood of continuing optimism".*

3.5) Pastoral Land Use in the High Country - A Socially Produced Landscape

McDowell (1994) suggests that material landscapes are not neutral, but reflect power relations and dominant ways of perceiving the world. Similarly, Cosgrove (1984:15) argues landscape is a social product bound by class consciousness: *"Landscape represents an historically specific way of experiencing the world developed by, and meaningful to, certain social groups.... It represents a way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relationship with nature, and through which they have underlined and communicated their own social role and that of others with respect to nature."* Cosgrove's conceptualisation of landscape, as a social product, can be used to give insights into the traditional use of the high country for material benefit.

Pastoral development in the high country arose out of a distinct social and cultural context. The early pastoralists believed they held dominion over nature and the high country was identified as a landscape suitable for exploiting material benefits. Large tracts of the high country landscapes were taken up by entrepreneurs and squatters who developed wealthy pastoral estates based upon wool production. These "pastoral kingdoms" were supported by favourable land policy formulated by their peers. Several high country runholders held important political and economic posts and were in positions to influence policy which would favour pastoralists. For example John Acland, who established a run at Mt Peel, was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1865; Frederick Weld established a number of high country estates, and served as Premier, and was a member of the Parliamentary Upper House for thirty years; William Rolleston managed Lake Coleridge station and served as Provincial Superintendent for Canterbury (Cumberland 1981: 112-115). *"In the southern provincial legislatives, pastoral oligarchies ensured the concurrence of government planning with entrepreneurial planning in such matters as land regulation"* (O'Connor 1993: 130).

The high country was established as a landscape for pastoral production, maintained by a distinct class of wealthy landowners (or leaseholders) who held considerable political influence. As New Zealand land settlement and economic development depended to a large extent upon wool production, pastoralism remained the dominant commercial land use in the high country (which was confirmed by the fact that there were no alternative commercial land uses considered suitable for the high country). High country pastoralisits established a political and economic hegemony which has remained largely unchallenged until recently. In this sense, the use of high country landscapes for material purposes was a product of the social and cultural context in which they were constructed. So why and when therefore, has the "high country" come to be considered as belonging to us all?

3.6) Degradation of High Country Environments

Before the high country slopes could be stocked, extensive burning of the tussock grasslands was seen to be necessary. Many European settlers viewed the high country, providing it was burnt, as only "grand hills for sheep". In their natural state the high country tussock grasslands were unsuitable for grazing, forming an unpalatable barrier to stock. Guthrie-Smith (in Gresham 1978: 24) describes the runholders response to their tussock covered acquisition: *"This brown, dead quilt of rotting vegetation lay sometimes feet deep on the ranges of... the whole of the South Island... It was the practice of the squatter to reach his vast leasehold mountains before stocking, burn his mountain charcoal black, return to find them vivid green and then and there to liberate his merinos* (sic)*."*

Although the short term results of burning helped make the fortunes of many runholders, the long term effects of repeated fires were harmful to soil quality. Following burning, some tussock areas failed to regenerate. The grasslands that did regenerate produced fresh palatable growth, but were often placed under stress following the resumption of grazing. Scientific evidence suggests that burning reduced soil productivity and contributed to the long-term loss of soil and vegetative nutrients, leaving the high country slopes susceptible to erosion (Zotov 1938; Connor 1961; Gresham 1978; O'Connor 1982).

In some regions, the protective cover of the tussock grasslands was progressively destroyed and the soil was exposed to the harsh high country climate and the forces of erosion.

High country soil degradation was exacerbated by the introduction and spread of exotic weeds and pests, especially rabbits. Rabbits consumed precious feed and left the land susceptible to erosion, particularly in the climatic and topographic extremes of the high country. The spread and growth of rabbit numbers in the 1870s and 1880s coincided with a period of maximum stocking loads by runholders. The effects of rabbit infestations on pastoral viability and soil degradation were exacerbated by the reduction in available herbage as a result of burning and overstocking (O'Connor 1982; Ackroyd 1993). *"From the 1870s those voracious, fast breeding newcomers threatened to take complete possession of sheep runs. On many a South Island station, the carrying capacity of pastures was halved and runholders were brought to the verge of bankruptcy"* (Cumberland 1981: 184).

Insecure tenure failed to encourage runholders to improve the condition of the soil. Because the 1877 Land Act ensured a pastoral licence was put up for auction every 10 years, some runholders were outbid for their licences and they lost their run and their homes (Blake et al. 1983). Often runholders were prepared to try and exploit their property as much as they could before their licence expired. Under such a tenure system, many farmers were encouraged to overstock their run for short term gain. The tenure provisions *"encouraged a system of farming which sought high immediate profits with little regard for the effect on the land itself"* (Walls 1966: 36). By 1880, livestock numbers reached a peak, by which time the high country was grossly overstocked (O'Connor 1980).

The method of extensive pastoralism which evolved on the high country runs was characterised by O'Connor (1983: 212) as *"exploitative"*, in that it made use of existing soil and vegetation resources with virtually no improvements. Runholders were reluctant to invest in soil improvements as they believed it compromised their financial position to buy back their licence upon expiry.

"In effect, the more a run was improved the less chance there was of getting it back, and the worse it was farmed the better chance of getting a reduction in the annual rental" (Ackroyd 1993: 22). By the 1880s, the cumulative effects of burning, overgrazing and rabbit infestations had a significant impact upon high country productivity. Soil quality and vegetation suffered progressive depletion and runholders carrying capacity fell markedly. In the Central Otago Range for example, O'Connor (1980: 209) estimates that in the 25 years from 1880, the high country grasslands carrying capacity dropped by 60%.

3.7) High Country Retrenchment

Relatively low wool prices for wool in the 1880s and 1890s contributed to economic instability for many high country runholders. In addition, a sequence of severe snowstorms caused considerable stock losses, *"especially the legendary event of 1895"* (O'Connor and Kerr 1978: 106). As wool prices fell, mounting debt began to affect several high country runs, and exacerbated the lack of investment necessary to replenish soil quality (Gardner 1981). Beset by a number of environmental problems, insecure tenure, unstable wool prices, and a lack of capital and knowledge necessary to sustain pastoral farming, the high country entered a period of relative economic dormancy which continued through until the 1950s. *"By the 1900s, much of the high country was in a thoroughly wasted state and remained so for half of a century"* (Kerr 1990: 25).

Although land degradation continued to occur on many high country runs, there began to be some awareness of the degradative effects of farming practices. Changes to the Land Act in 1892 for example, prohibited the burning of bush, and licensees were expected to take partial responsibility for the control of weeds and rabbits. In 1913 restrictions were placed on the burning of tussock and in 1922 the Land Act was amended to prohibit any burning of tussock without the consent of the Land Board (Blake et al 1983: 41).

Although the restrictions to freehold leasehold land were reduced in the 1920s to encourage farm investment, few farmers took up the opportunity to purchase their properties. The depleted state of unimproved pasture, adverse economic conditions (especially during the 1930s), and the resulting fiscal stringency of runholders, provided little incentive to freehold (Blake et al. 1983). Walls (1966) notes that by the 1940s, rental payments were likely to be far lower than interest payments on mortgages for land that had been freeholded. The lack of desire for freeholding was reflected in the marked decline in high country run values which occurred between 1912 and 1950; a reduction in capital value (corrected to 1955 base) from nearly £900 000 to less than £400 000 (ibid). This reduction in capital value was principally a decline in the unimproved value of land (Walls 1966; O'Connor and Kerr 1978; Blake 1983). Furthermore, in several districts a drop in the value of land occurred alongside a decrease in sheep numbers. Walls (1966), and O'Connor and Kerr (1978) suggest that from a compilation of data which portrays a decline in high country stock numbers from 1900 through to 1950 (Note Figure 3.2), there was economic decline in the high country.

Figure 3.2: Canterbury High Country Sheep Numbers 1900-1950

(Source: Walls 1966:11)

This period marked the declining economic importance of high country landscapes relative to their former economic and political significance. High country pastoralism diminished in national economic importance, particularly compared to other productive landscapes such as the lowland intensive farming regions, from which much of the nations' wealth came to be derived.

3.8) Securing Pastoral Production - The Land Act 1948

As a result of growing concern over ecological degradation and its effect on the nation's economic base, the Government was forced to address issues of soil conservation. Although management practices adapted by land occupiers, were identified as the cause of soil degradation, the beginnings of soil conservation policy built strongly on the idea that it was the responsibility of the State to provide for conservation (Arbuckle 1989). Although there was a genuine concern regarding soil erosion in the high country, conservation policies were designed to complement agricultural production. Therefore they did not conflict with land development policies that encouraged economic growth.

In 1948 a major consolidation of land laws resulted in a new Land Act. The Act thoroughly revised the array of Crown tenures that had developed previously, and established the pastoral lease as the prevailing form of tenure. The retention of Crown ownership of pastoral land was seen to be necessary in order for the State to facilitate production and expedite soil conservation programmes (Ackroyd 1993).

The new Land Act secured pastoralism as the primary land use in the high country and provided high country runholders with what was considered a secure form of tenure. The terms of the pastoral lease were significant to runholders in that the lease was for 33 years (as opposed to 10 and 21 year terms) and perpetually renewable. Previously, runholders had cited a lack of tenure security as a reason for their reluctance to invest in farm development. The changes to the Land Act in 1948 created a *"climate of confidence"* (Blake et al 1983: 48) which encouraged leaseholders to undertake farm investment programmes.

Farm investment (which was often supported by government subsidies) was manifested through the application of soil fertilizers, revegetation programmes, the use of new pastures, and subdivision.

The terms of the Act meant that high country runs were classified as *"pastoral land, being land suitable or adaptable only for pastoral purposes"* (Clayton et al. 1982: 4). The high country was thus distinguished from "farm land", and extensive pastoralism was effectively the only commercial land use considered appropriate for the high country. Any other high country land use, such as nature conservation, recreation or tourism, was not recognised by legislation. Lessees were granted exclusive rights of pasturage and exclusive occupation. Rent was determined by the Land Settlement Board (LSB) based on the carrying capacity of the unimproved run (amended to a percentage of land exclusive of improvements in 1979). The LSB was empowered to impose stock restrictions for a run, and lessees had to gain the Board's consent for a change in land use including cropping, burning, forestry and cultivation (Commissioner of Crown Lands 1994).

The Land Act 1948 augmented the Soil Conservation and River Control Act 1941, which was designed to prevent and mitigate soil erosion and promote soil conservation. Under the Land Act, government policies (encouraged by farm lobby pressure) remained committed to pastoral production. As a result of concessional rents, perpetual rights of renewal, and soil conservation programmes that could be implemented for pastoral benefit (through for example subsidised fencing and irrigation in return for the retirement of marginal land), the reforms were *"well received"* by runholders (Ackroyd 1993: 28).

The Land Act reflected a universal reading of the high country. High country landscapes continued to be managed in terms of their suitability for one dominant land use. Although the 1948 Land Act arose out of a concern for the condition of high country lands, and despite the relatively low returns yielded by many farmers in previous years, pastoralism was still thought to be the only productive land use suitable for high country grasslands.

The 1982 Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Crown Pastoral Leases (ibid: 56) notes the line of thought used by the legislative framers in 1948: *"There was overall no indication of any significant change in thinking as to the likely future use of this type of land"*. The Land Act promoted a pastoral monoculture, and lesses were effectively locked into a system of pastoralism which discouraged diversification of land use or income. At the 1950 Grassland Association Conference, Lance McCaskill commented that *"to New Zealand as a whole the tussock grasslands are of value for one purpose only, that is the feeding of livestock"* (in O'Connor 1989: 48)

3.9) Improvements in Run Management

High country pastoralism was supported by improving economic conditions in the 1950s and 1960s. A renewed sense of tenure security, economic incentives, and a rise in wool prices, encouraged farm capital to be directed into new opportunities for pasture improvement. Together, the change in political and economic circumstances suggested a secure future for pastoralism. Burning restrictions, more effective pest/ weed control and reinvestment of farm income helped mitigate the deterioration of high country soils. The adoption of improved technology and management techniques enabled many regions of the high country to be farmed more intensively, particularly in the productive alpine valleys and flats. Oversowing and aerial topdressing provided an economic and practicable way of applying soil fertilisers.

Run management plans for soil conservation purposes played an important role in pastoral redevelopment. Soil and water conservation plans (SWCP - or "run plans") were developed in response to the notion of the efficient use of natural resources (Kerr and Douglas 1984: 95). The plans introduced a policy for destocking and retirement of pastoral land considered unsuitable for grazing (because of soil quality and topography). In return, runholders gained financial assistance for fencing, oversowing and topdressing, tree planting, irrigation, and the development of structures designed to conserve the soil. Between 1959 and 1985 catchment authorities prepared 113 SWCPs on pastoral leases that involved destocking and retirement of some 483,000 hectares (Ackroyd 1993: 30).

Although the taxpayer funded programme proved costly (more than $14 million), it was justified as a means to conserve high country soil quality, and to encourage economic development for national benefit (Kerr and Douglas 1984: 105).

Improvements in run management meant that some areas of the high country were farmed intensively, and more discriminately. Farm patterns were distinguished between soil and ecological regimes so that the high country lands which were considered most suitable for pastoral land use, such as the alpine basins, underwent the most intensive development. thereby sustaining a greater proportion of production.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s farm development was supported by government subsidies such as the Land Development Encouragement Scheme and Supplementary Minimum Prices Scheme. Economic policy was directed towards increasing production, although it was generally concentrated on land where improvements could be sustained. In spite of land retirement, high country stock numbers and performance increased in response to pasture improvement and government incentives. However, the fine wool produced by the traditional high country sheep breed, the merino, was not supported by subsidies to the extent that other wool producers were. With a guaranteed price for lamb, sheep and coarse wool, many runholders established flocks suited for both meat and wool production, for example through breeds such as Romney and Perendale. Pastoral development, intensification and diversification, placed pressure on the traditional low cost nature of extensive pastoralism. O'Connor (1983: 107) notes that by the 1980s, 12% (on average) of the area of high country runs had been oversown and topdressed and that these areas provided 55% of livestock feed.

3.10) Alternatives to Pastoralism

Throughout the development of extensive pastoralism, the suitability of pastoral land use to the high country environment was never seriously challenged. Although other land uses such as recreation took place, they were clearly subservient to pastoralism.

— Recreation

By the 1920s and 1930s a "recreational tradition" had been established by a number of keen trampers, hunters, and mountaineers, who formed recreational clubs to lead expeditions into the remote high country and alpine interior of the South Island. In the 1930s the recreational clubs, led by Federated Mountain Club (FMC), were instrumental in lobbying for legislation which reserved and protected substantial areas of the high country. FMC opposed privatization and demanded public access to high country lands, which they argued should be every New Zealanders right (Molloy 1977).

Recreationist objectives were in part fulfilled with the passing of the National Parks Act in 1952, and the evolution of the State forest park concept in the 1950s, which provided for the protection of large tracts of the high country. Recreational demands were helped by the fact that much of the land that was valued for its scenic properties and recreation, was considered unsuitable for settlement and farming (such as much of Arthur's Pass National Park), and thus *"passed into preservation almost by default"* (Fitzharris and Kearsley 1987: 204). More than two million hectares of high country land came to be managed for conservation and the protection of natural and scenic values. A recreational tradition was entrenched and recreational opportunities were instituted in the high country as part of New Zealand's heritage.

Improvements in roading and transport has opened up recreational opportunities in the high country for both New Zealanders and international visitors. *"The high country is no longer the preserve of an elite group of physically fit recreationists"* (Blake et al. 1983: 51). While there has been an upsurge in traditional recreational activities such as tramping and hunting, increased access and the development of service industries has opened up opportunities for tourism. During the past 20-30 years the distinction between the traditional "Kiwi recreationist" and the international tourist has grown. Commercial development in the high country has led to conflicts of interest, particularly for recreationists who are concerned that the development of private tourist enterprises will lead to a loss of public access privileges. These issues are examined further in Chapter Four.

— HYDRO ELECTRIC POWER GENERATION AND IRRIGATION

The use and storage of water for irrigation has been valued as a productive land use since pastoralism was first established. Pastoral settlements throughout the South Island successfully exploited the water resources captured in the high country. Irrigation systems were established along the large rivers such as the Waimakariri, Rakaia, Rangitata and Waitaki. In the 1930s the first large dam was built on the Waitaki as a means to supply large quantities of cheap hydro-electricity to the growing lowland settlements. Major hydro-power developments were undertaken in the high country including at Lake Pukaki and Tekapo, and more recently the Clyde dam.

Watershed management in the high country was perceived to be important for soil conservation and flood control (Fitzharris and Kearsley 1987: 205). In this sense water management and hydro electric power generation is an important reason why all New Zealanders possess a direct interest in the high country landscapes. As the source of the South Island's major rivers, hydro-power generation has grown to play a fundamental part in the national economy. Hydro-power generation (of which 78% is generated in parts of the South Island high country) presently provides 75% of the nation's electricity demands (Department of Statistics 1995:306).

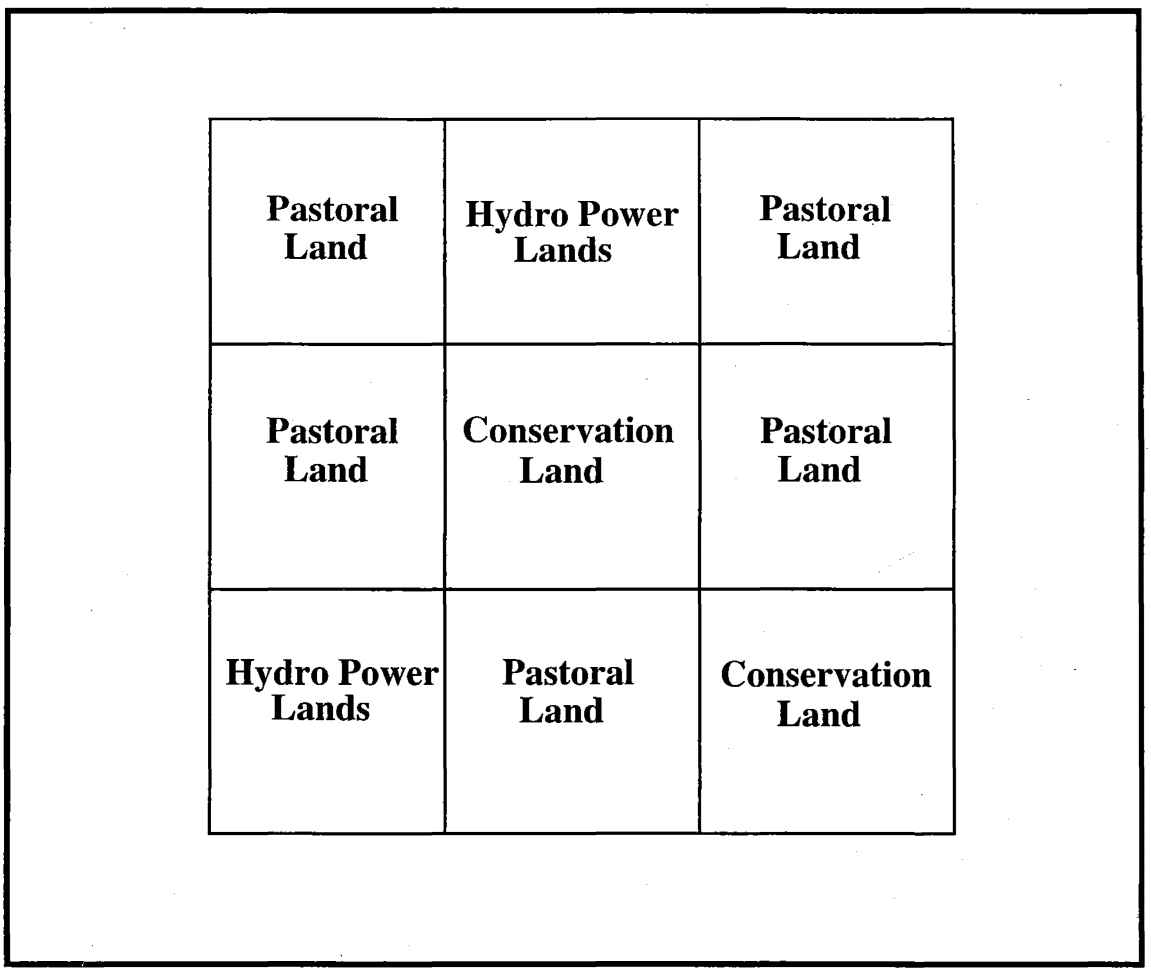


Figure 3.3: High Country Land Use - Socially and Spatially Separated

Conflicts of land use in high country environments were historically minimised because the activities and functions of the land use were separated, both socially and spatially (as portrayed in Figure 3.3) (Pawson 1987). In more remote alpine regions (which were considered unsuitable for pastoralism because of their physical characteristics), recreation was catered for by the establishment of national parks and reserves. Hydro electric power generation was developed along the lakes and rivers of the high country, and in the tussock grasslands, pastoralism prevailed. Hence there was a clear social and spatial division between conservation and production lands.

3.11) Economic Restructuring and the Implications for the Pastoral Industry

Since the mid-1980s, changing political economic circumstances have had a significant impact upon the farming industry and land use in the high country. Boston and Holland (1987) note that the cumulative effects of the postwar legacy of economic intervention, political manipulation of market forces, and the dominance of organised sectional interests, resulted in national economic recession. By the early 1980s New Zealand was in a fiscal crisis, and many taxpayers were no longer prepared to afford generous subsidies to privileged sectors of the economy, nor to economic practices which many parties considered unsustainable (Wearing 1994). In addition, Treasury considered the costs of subsidising the development of marginal lands to be an inefficient use of state resources (Britton et al 1992).

In 1984, the new Labour Government embarked on a radical programme of restructuring which was designed to improve the nation's economic performance. The political economic reforms of the 1980s have made New Zealand more integrated with the global economy. Previously, successive governments had intervened in the production process, through for example subsidies and import tariffs, in order to regulate the local economy from international market fluctuations. Restructuring has resulted in the New Zealand economy establishing new international links in terms of trade, production and finance which are determined to a greater extent upon global market forces (LeHeron et al. 1992).

The reforms had a major impact on the national economy. The farming industry was affected by the removal of farm subsidies, rising interest rates, and a decline in prices for farm products, particularly meat and wool. Financial assistance to pastoral agriculture was cut substantially, from $1035 million in 1985, to $206 million in 1990 (ibid). With reduced equity in their land, and with the high cost of debt servicing (especially for those who had recently invested in rural property), falling commodity prices meant that many pastoral farms faced running at a loss, particularly those who had been financially dependent upon the production subsidies (Wearing 1994).

The effects of restructuring had a significant impact in the high country where farmers (as elsewhere) faced rising costs for farm inputs, and falling prices for farm produce. As a means of coping with the changes, many runholders reduced farm expenditure, through, for example, relying on family labour, and cut back on farm investment, such as reducing the use of fertilisers and machinery. Several families sought off-farm work and resorted to semi-subsistence. In some high country areas several runholders were forced to sell or reduce stock numbers, particularly in regions which were subject to rabbit infestations and the spread of hieracium, such as the McKenzie Basin.

Nevertheless, many of the high country stations were less drastically affected than their lowland counterparts. Most high country properties had characteristically been in their owners' (leaseholders) hands for a long time, and their freehold portions were generally debt free. Furthermore, diversification into new land uses had begun on many properties, such as deer farming and farm tourism, and the returns from fine wools (a major component of rangeland properties), did not suffer the downturn that affected the lamb industry. Many high country farmers who had established flocks which took advantage of the meat and wool subsidies, simply reverted back to fine wool production, or in some cases sought alternative sources of income including tourism or urban based investment (Fairweather 1985).

3.12) High Country Farming Land Use and Production

Federated Farmers (1992: 2) maintains that high country farm production benefits the nation and affects *"the livelihoods of communities not directly involved in the high country"*. Although high country farmers maintain they play a productive and valuable role in the national economy, high country landscapes have declined in economic and political significance. Whereas the wool industry was once the primary productive land use and the major export income earner for the New Zealand economy, in terms of export earnings it now ranks below the meat industry, manufacturing, dairy, horticulture and tourism (Department of Statistics 1995).

In recent years, high country farmers have diversified into cattle and deer farming, as well as farm tourism. Nevertheless, wool production remains the primary land use which contributes approximately 70% of revenue to the average high country property (Table 3.2). The 3.4 million hectares of the high country which are farmed supports approximately 3 million sheep, 100 000 cattle and 30,000 deer (Federated Farmers 1992: 2). Figures from 1992 indicate that high country farm production contributed $147 million in export income to New Zealand (ibid). This is compared to the total gross agricultural production figure from 1991/92 of $9,100 million (Department of Statistics 1995: 327).

PRODUCE	% of GROSS REVENUE
Wool	68.5
Lamb	5.5
Sheep	10.0
Cattle	13.0
Other	3.0

Table 3.2: Average Contribution to Gross Revenue of High Country Properties 1984 - 1993

(Source: Working Party 1994: 47)

Although they comprise only about 8% of the total sheep flock in New Zealand, merinos are the dominant breed in the high country (*The Press* October 12, 1995). Merino are renown for their high quality wool, and their ability to withstand a harsh climate and rugged terrain. Since restructuring, high country farmers have tended to reduce the composition of their flocks (through breeds such as romney) which relied on subsidies for meat and coarse wool production. Therefore the merino has prevailed as the predominant form of high country stock.

High country landscapes support a fine wool industry which has developed as a profitable niche market. While other sectors of the wool industry have declined by 30 - 40% in the last 10 years, the merino industry has grown by more than 120% (*The Press* October 10, 1995). Because high country wools are generally whiter, softer, and cleaner than those produced in the other main wool producing nations, high country wools are presently in demand, particularly for the fashion and apparel industry (Federated Farmers 1992: 2). In comparison, coarse wool production is in a relative slump as a result of over-supply, and because of the development of synthetic fibre as a suitable replacement, in for example carpets. Although merino wool makes up approximately 5% of the weight of the New Zealand clip, it provides 11% of its value at an average clean price of $12.40/ kilogram, compared to a national average of $5.58/ kilogram for coarse wool (*The New Zealand Farmer* August 3, 1995). Although the wool industry is a volatile market, many high country farmers are optimistic that they can benefit from the strengthening of the fine wool industry in New Zealand.

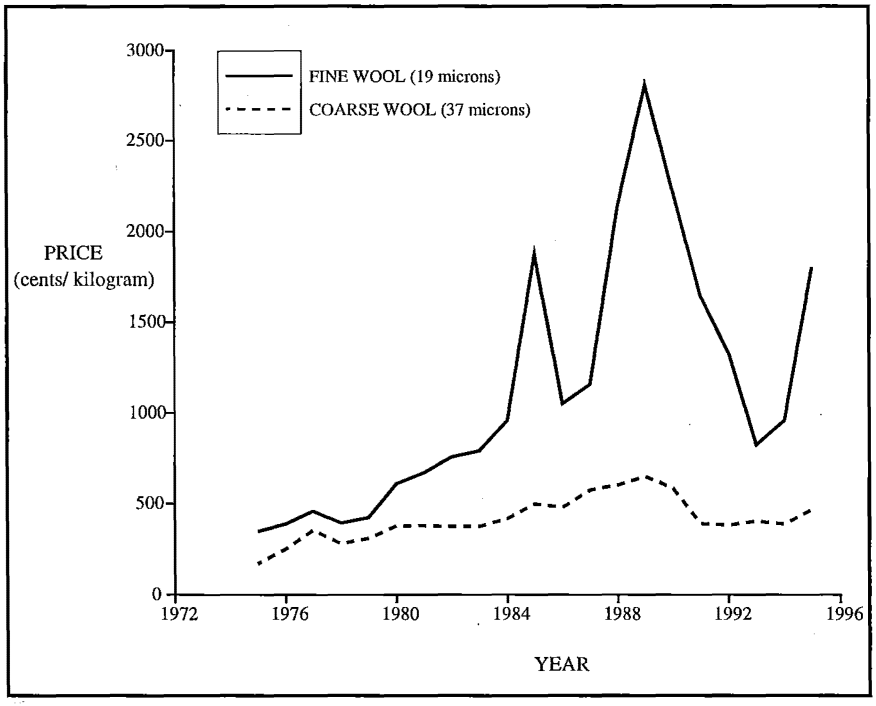


Figure 3.4: New Zealand Coarse and Fine Wool Prices

(Source: Britland pers. comm 1995)

3.13) Development of Alternative High Country Production Values

Amidst a contemporary context of political economic, environmental, social and cultural change, high country landscapes have been subjected to a number of external and internal pressures for a more diverse range of commercial and non-commercial land uses. Although wool production remains a significant land use in the high country, high country environments are now utilised for a variety of productive values.

Through the process of commodification, rural space is seen to be inextricably linked to the wider dynamics of the national and international political economy. Economic restructuring has opened up opportunities for new commodified uses of rural land. Cloke (1992b) argues that the changing international political economy, which has involved privatization and deregulation, has encouraged the establishment of new rural spaces for production. Deregulation and the loss of agricultural subsidies has encouraged rural landowners (or leaseholders) to diversify away from traditional farm production and provide enterprises which can capitalize on new markets, such as forestry and tourism.

In addition to wider political economic change, rural commodification has come about as a result of growing environmental pressures for more sustainable land uses. Alternatives to pastoralism have been espoused by some parties as offering the opportunity for environmental rehabilitation and community regeneration (Ashdown and Lucas 1987; Grant 1988; Hughes 1993:6). Amidst the growth in the international tourism industry, several runholders, as well as agents based externally to the high country, have taken up opportunities to develop enterprises which take advantage of changing patterns of rural consumption, through for example ecotourism.

Several lesses have successfully amalgamated tourism with farm activities, for example Glentanner station near Mt Cook. In addition, several runholders have indicated an interest in selling or leasing out subdivisions in order to exploit the demand for the "rural lifestyle".

In some cases this has already been achieved, through the development of high country communities based upon the consumption of leisure activities, at for example Castle Hill Village, and the redevelopments at Twizel and Lake Coleridge Village.

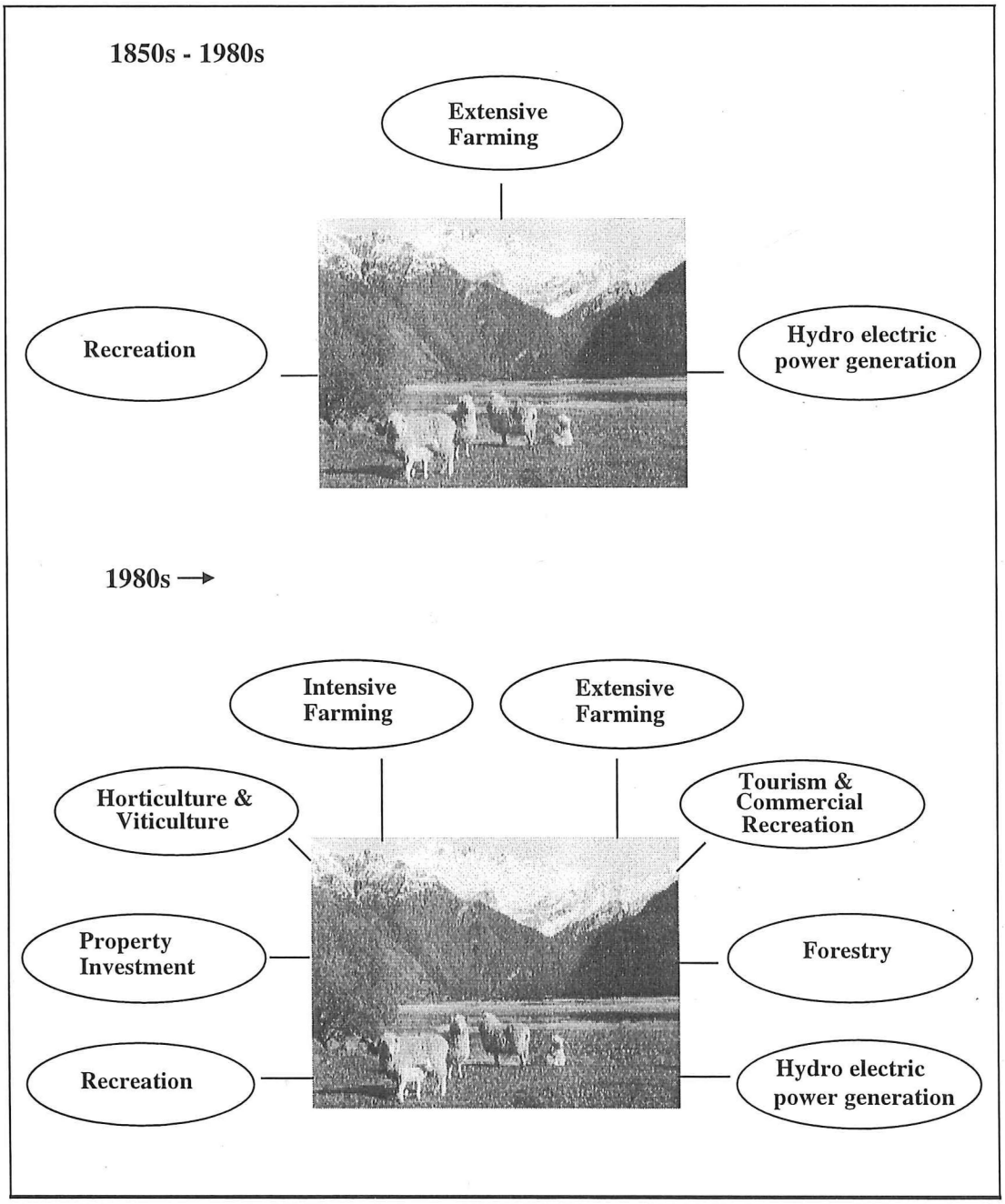


Figure 3.5: High Country Material Land Use

The high country is presently undergoing development for a diverse range of economic land uses, including the production of high value herbal crops, low fat meat (including "gourmet" merino and feral rabbit) for niche markets, energy development in the form of wind farms for electricity production, and agroforestry ventures. The search for sustainable (economically and environmentally) land uses has become apparent at the local level, where many lesses have developed commercial activities appropriate to the local setting. This is manifested by for example the development of horticulture and viticulture on high country land in Central Otago, eco-tourism ventures in the Upper Waimakariri Basin, and commercial recreation near Lake Wakatipu.

3.14) Summary

Landscapes are not simply developed as a consequence of a specific way of looking, but are the material outcome of interactions between environment and society (McDowell 1994). The material values of the high country have changed significantly. The change in commercial land use in high country environments has been associated with a changing social, cultural and political economic context. The establishment of a pastoral industry in the high country was based upon the importance of wool production for the national economy. Despite its degradative effects upon the environment, high country pastoralism was supported by a political economic system which encouraged pastoral farming through agricultural subsidies and production incentives.

The production values of the high country have traditionally been underpinned by a number of social, political and economic foundations which supported agriculture as the primary commercial land use in New Zealand. The restructuring of the 1980s acknowledged the changing nature of the national and international political economic order. As a result of internal and external pressures for change, new localised patterns of commercial land use have evolved. From within the high country, land occupiers have taken up opportunities to diversify into new profitable and (seemingly) sustainable land uses such as forestry and tourism. As the high country has become politically and marginalised, high country people have looked to alternative commercial land uses as a means to preserve their social and economic standing.

From outside the high country, there have also been increasing pressures for change, from those who hold shared and contested readings of high country landscapes. These interest groups seek the recognition of their values, and to be in a position to gain benefits (symbolic and material) from the control and use of high country environments. This is reflected for example in Chapter Four and Chapter Eight as nature conservationists seek to increase their "stake" in the management of high country landscapes, and in Chapter Six as Ngai Tahu look to assert their identity based upon their spiritual and material association with high country environments.

"What was once a comfortable between conservation lands and pastoral lands has now become a zone of tensions" (O'Connor 1993:7). The development of alternative productive land uses has created the potential for incompatible and conflicting values and activities. Land which was once utilised exclusively for pastoralism is now valued for a range of values, symbolic and material. These new developments stand to alter the social and cultural nature of the high country landscapes, and present the potential for new and diverse conflicts, at a variety of different scales.

Chapter Four

High Country Conflicts - The Political Economic, Environmental & Legal Contexts

4.1) Introduction

The landscapes of the high country are valued for a multiplicity of reasons and uses, by a variety of groups who claim an interest in their management. As society's values toward the landscape change, and as the high country is utilised for a diverse range of land uses, there has developed a conflict of values contested by a number of interested groups at different scales. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an understanding of the contexts from which high country conflicts have emerged.

High country conflicts have developed from a context in which there has been political economic change, and growing concerns for the welfare of the environment. During the 1980s and 1990s, New Zealand society has become increasingly concerned with issues of economic and environmental sustainability. It is within such contexts that a number of conflicts have emerged as competing interests clash over the control and use of high country landscapes. Following the escalation of high country conflicts, a process of legislative and tenure reform has been set up which seeks to enhance locally based resolutions.

4.2) Environmental Administration Restructuring

In the 1980s the Labour Party built up a set of policies which successfully targeted constituents who were assumed to be sympathetic to the environmental movement, particularly young urban liberal voters (Britton et al 1992). Based upon a comprehensive environmental platform, the fourth Labour Government came to power in 1984 and initiated a radical policy of environmental management reform.

Environmental restructuring was incorporated alongside a much wider ranging political agenda, based upon a set of neoconservative economic principles upheld by Treasury and supported by business interests (Note Section 3.11). Alongside economic deregulation and privatisation, government departments were restructured in order to enhance accountability, efficiency, performance and non-conflicting objectives (Treasury 1984).

In order to resolve the inherent conflicts between the development and preservation roles held by some government agencies, the reforms attempted to separate the resource production and conservation functions of departments responsible for natural resources. For example, the Department of Lands and Survey (DLS) was responsible for land development of State farm land, and also held conservation responsibility for national parks and reserves. The environmental management reforms included setting up a new Ministry for the Environment (MfE), which provided government with environmental policy advice, and the Department of Conservation (DOC), which was responsible for managing the Crown's natural and historic estate for conservation purposes.The commercial activities of the State's resource managers were corporatised through the formation of State Owned Enterprises such as Forestry Corporation, Electricorp, Coalcorp and Landcorp.

4.3) Sustainable Development

Economic development has commonly been regarded as the foundation for social progress; *"the means by which the lives of all members of society would constantly improve"* (Bacow and Wheeler in Blackford 1992: 5). Nevertheless, the effects of "economic progress" have been increasingly challenged as contributing to environmental degradation, and the intensification of social inequality and poverty (O'Riordan 1989; Sachs 1991). Informed by scientific investigations, there has emerged widespread concern that human activities are having detrimental impacts upon the environment which threaten the resource base of many economic systems (Grundy 1993). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, western governments in particular, began to appreciate the importance of the long term availability of natural resources for continued economic growth.

The concept of sustainability was espoused by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (UNCED) and supported by the Commission's Brundtland Report in 1987. The Brundtland Report promoted "sustainable development" as a strategy which meets the needs of present generations, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Memon 1993). Underlying this notion of sustainable development was the integration of environmental policies with economic growth strategies, thus enabling the capitalist system based upon progressive development to be preserved. It is significant that the concept of sustainable development appealed to conservationists as a means to preserve environmental values, and also to production interests as a means to pursue indefinite economic development and material progress.

4.4) Resource Management Act 1991

The economic and environmental reforms of the 1980s paved the way for a thorough revision of resource management and environmental planning law in New Zealand. A comprehensive process of Resource Management Law Reform (RMLR) was initiated by the Government in 1987 which culminated in the passing of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). The RMA repealed and outmoded a range of legislation which had previously been part of a fragmented environmental planning process. The RMA marked a significant change from the prescriptive land use planning laws which had previously controlled development in New Zealand, and replaced them with a focus upon "sustainable management of natural and physical resources". New Zealand is thought to be the first nation in the world to give direct legislative recognition to the notion of sustainability espoused by UNCED (Britton et al 1992; Memon 1993).

The RMA established a streamlined environmental planning framework which focuses upon regulating the impacts of human activities upon the environment. Local and regional government assumed increased responsibilities for a wide range of resource management outcomes. Centralised administration of pest and weed management was phased out and the duties transferred to the new councils. An effect of this change was to make the beneficiaries of those services more financially responsible through "user-pays" (Ackroyd 1993: 38).

Although the RMA acknowledges the importance of maintaining environmental standards, its overall structure reflects a move away from State sponsored economic growth, and places greater emphasis upon economic instruments to achieve favourable environmental outcomes (Memon 1993).

4.5) Implications for the High Country

The economic and environmental reforms had significant implications for the high country. The high country administrative framework underwent widespread reform. Prior to restructuring, pastoral leases and licences were administered by the Land Settlement Board (LSB), an agency for the DLS. The LSB however, held sources of conflict between other government departments involved in high country management, including catchment authorities who were responsible for water and soil resources and oversaw run management plans. In 1986/7 the commercial and preservation functions of the DLS were split. The LSB was replaced by a new corporate body, Landcorp, which was made responsible for the commercial interests of the former DLS. Restructuring also affected public agencies that held statutory responsibility for soil and water conservation in the high country. Catchment authorities were abolished and their responsibilities allocated to the new tier of regional councils.

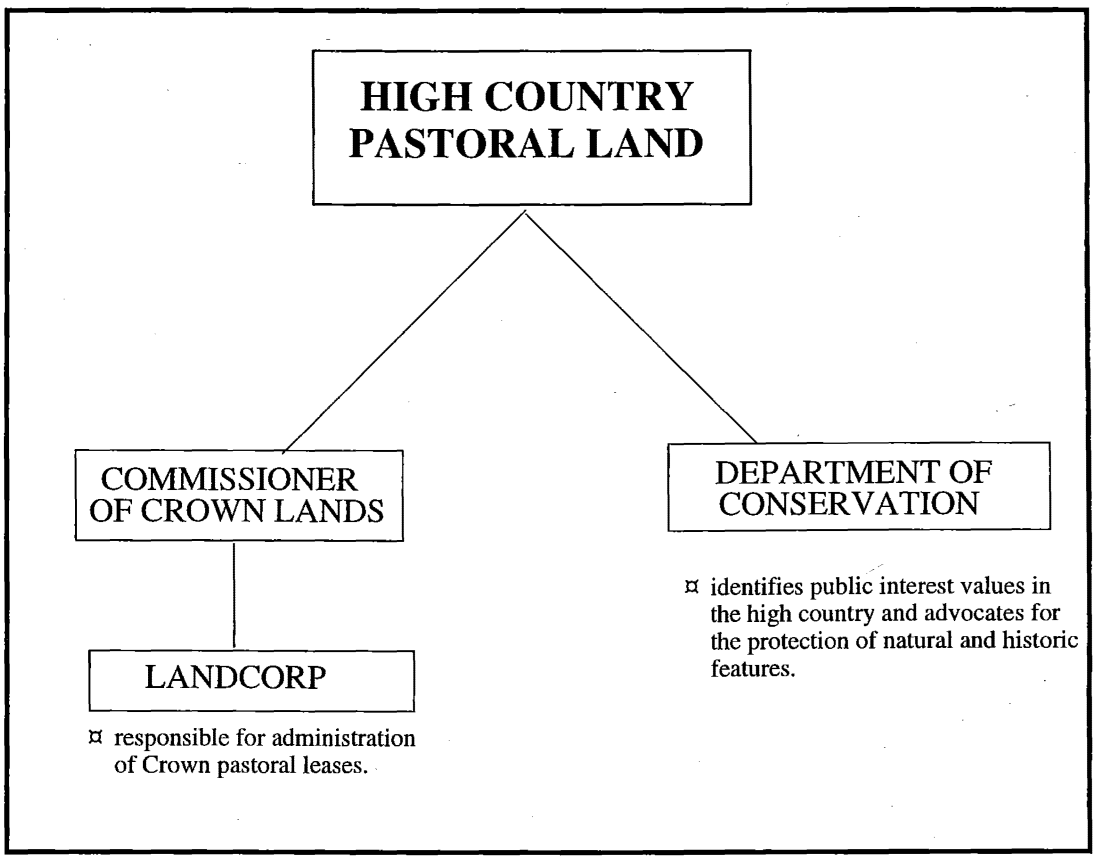


Figure 4.1: Administration of High Country Pastoral Land

Landcorp Property Limited is presently contracted by the Commissioner of Crown Lands (who is responsible to the Minister of Lands) to administer Crown pastoral leases. Although the Government sought to disengage the State from the management of resources for production, in the high country pastoral lands this was complicated by the fact that demand for land use involved both production and conservation values. As a consequence, the government decided to retain pastoral leasehold land in State ownership (for the time being). The Crown's non-commercial interests in high country pastoral lands were assigned to DOC, whose brief in the high country is to *"identify as far as possible the total extent of public interest in each pastoral lease and to advocate protection of natural and historic features"* (Ackroyd 1993: 37). In terms of a management agreement under the State Owned Enterprises Act 1986, Landcorp is required to confer with DOC regarding management of the leases, including proposals to change the nature of tenure.

4.6) Environmental Stress in the High Country - Context

Although the pastoral performance of the South Island high country is thought to have improved since the passing of the Land Act 1948, this has largely been attributed to advances in technology and management practices, involving improved pasture species, aerial topdressing and more effective pest control. Additionally, pastoral farming has been heavily supported by economic incentives which encouraged production, through for example fertiliser subsidies and favourable run management plans. The Commissioner of Crown Lands (1994: 20) states that *"this (short term) increase in productivity both masked and accelerated the long term trend towards resource degradation".*

In the 1950s, major pest and weed problems such as rabbits, were addressed through integrated programmes which involved aerial drops of poisoned bait and supported by on-the-ground follow-up by pest control workers, topdressing and oversowing (Hughes 1991: ii). The taxpayer- funded solutions of the 1950s however, are no longer considered affordable. Concern over the sustainability of high country pastoralism has mounted following a period in which lessees are now expected to meet the full costs of farm inputs. Farmers no longer receive the previous level of funding to control pest and weed infestation, most recently demonstrated by the termination of the centrally funded Rabbit and Land Management Programme in June 1995.

Wearing (1994) suggests that the post-subsidies experience of many land occupiers has demonstrated their long-term dependence upon production subsidies in the face of unpredictable market, biomass, and climatic conditions. Improvements in pastoral productivity tend to be short-lived and often based on ecologically insecure traditions, such as burning. Environmental decline is frequently a long term process that reduces the opportunity for systemic recovery and limits the range of desirable outcomes. *"Many farmers are trapped in ecological and environmental pits that mitigate against continued viability, and there seem to be clear links between low product prices, high input costs, lack of capital, loss of equity, and environmental deterioration"* (ibid: 187).

In 1994, the government set up a committee to identify the various ecological, economic and social factors regarded as important to achieving sustainable land management in the high country. The report by the Martin Committee (Working Party 1994), expressed concern that there had been a recorded reduction in levels of soil nutrients and organic material, and a decline in the structure and productivity of vegetation since pastoral farming began. The report concluded that pastoral use of up to 80% of the high country, which is in an "unimproved" condition, was likely to be unsustainable. The review noted that the present tenure system has proved ineffective in encouraging sustainability in the high country and that reform was necessary.

In some high country areas, there is land considered so degraded that it holds little or no value for conservation and production. This is particularly apparent on areas of land that have been degraded by hieracium and rabbits infestations. In the McKenzie Basin for example, there are thousands of hectares which are considered "wastelands", with no productive value. The Crown, regional and district councils are reluctant to take on the responsibility for the management of such degraded lands because they entail a considerable financial burden to improve.

Large tracts of high country land are in a degraded and deteriorating condition in terms of their capacity to sustain existing (albeit compromised) production and conservation values (Wearing 1994). The pastoral legacy combined with the biophysical and climatic characteristics of the high country, has resulted in a constrained and diminished resource base.

4.7) Causes of Land Degradation

There has been considerable debate regarding the causes of ecological deterioration in high country environments. Whereas farmers tend to emphasise that pests and weeds, particularly rabbits and hieracium, are the major causes of land degradation (Mark 1993), many scientists suggest that environmental degradation in the high country is due to the systemic collapse of a largely unimproved pastoral ecosystem (Wearing 1994). Wardle (1994: 171) suggests that *"ecological stresses are a result of inappropriate management practices which have not been sufficiently flexible to reflect the inherently uncertain and variable environment associated with the rangelands".*

"Spreading out with arms entangled,
Browntop, tussock, all get strangled"
(Federated Farmers 1992: 15)

Hieracium has been a growing problem in the high country, particularly since the 1970s (Working Party 1994: 35). Hieracium species are prolific seeders which compete with other vegetation for soil nutrients and moisture. Hieracium has little or no value, either for production (as it is largely unpalatable for stock), or aesthetically. Hieracium has been identified as a cause of land degradation in the high country by displacing indigenous vegetative species and restricting pastoral growth. Figure 4.2 shows the distribution of hawkweeds throughout the South Island.

There is considerable debate regarding whether hieracium is a cause of land degradation, a symptom, or both (Hughes 1991; Federated Farmers 1992; Working Party 1994; Wearing 1994). Rose (pers. comm. 1995) argues that hieracium is likely to spread on pastoral sites irrespective of grazing management and soil fertility, and that the removal of grazing fails to arrest the invasion of hawkweeds. Many other scientists and conservation groups however, blame soil depletion and overgrazing as the main causes of hieracium invasion. For example, Hunter (1991) suggests that hawkweeds are more likely to spread in areas that have been subjected to pastoral grazing and burning. *"While there may be some validity in these claims, farmers then point to ungrazed areas covered by a grey mat of unproductive vegetation. There is some evidence that careful grazing management can reduce the impact of king devil and tussock hawkweeds"* (Federated Farmers 1992: 15).

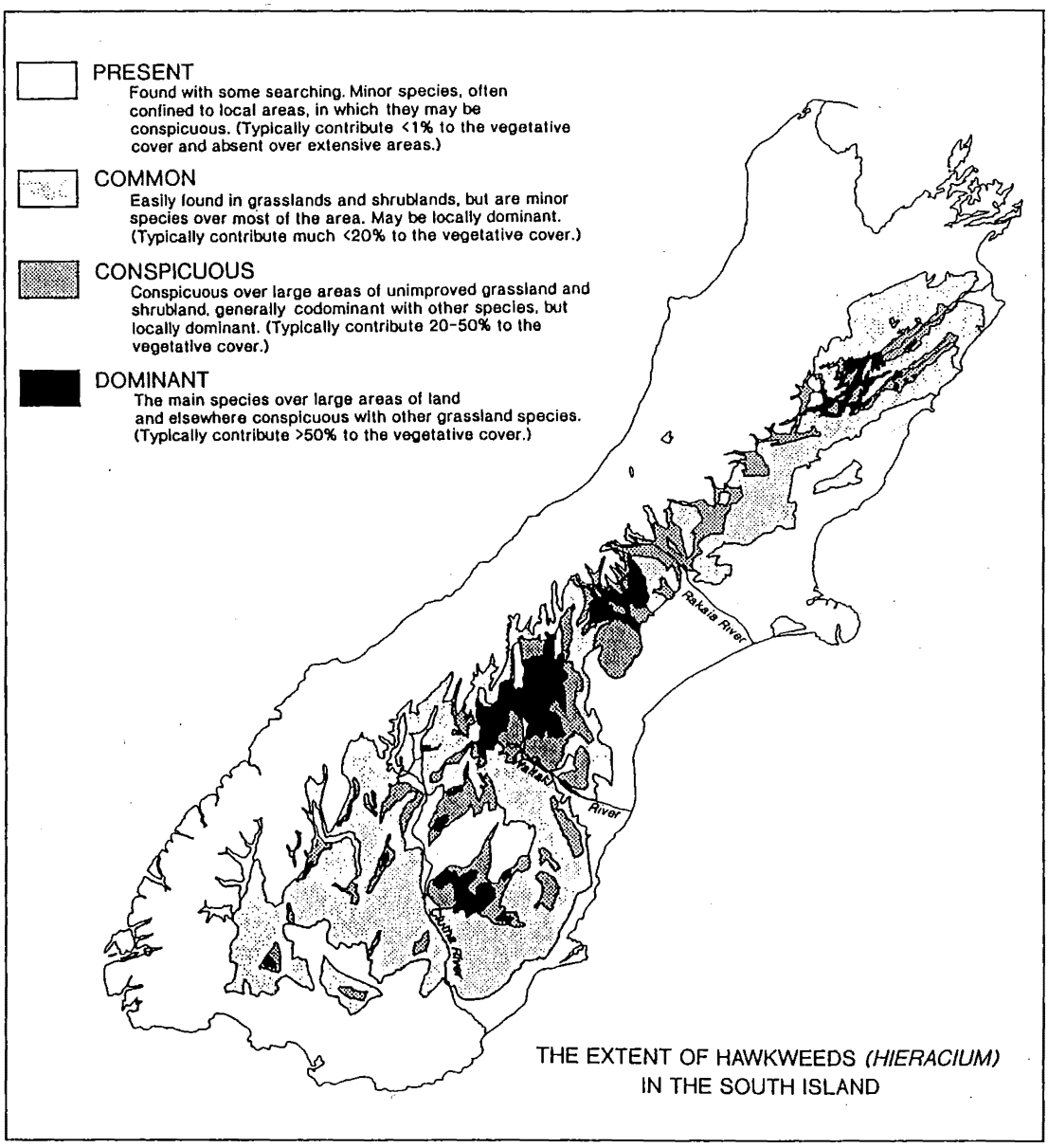


Figure 4.2: Extent of Hawkweeds (Hieracium) in the South Island

(Source: Working Party 1994: 37)

The only recognised control for hieracium is through topdressing and oversowing, although this is only effective where there is available moisture. In many areas, particularly of dense hawkweed cover, topdressing and oversowing are uneconomic options for many farmers.

Although biological controls have been proposed, there is concern that the elimination of hieracium would leave the fragile high country soils even more susceptible to erosion (Working Party 1994).

"I frolic, nibble, frisk and feed,
But all the time I breed and breed"

(Federated Farmers 1992: 14)

The *Martin Report* (Working Party 1994) states that 280, 000ha of the semi-arid high country is seriously threatened by the spread of rabbits. Many farmers consider rabbits to be the major reason for soil depletion in the high country (Federated Farmers 1992: 14).

"Rabbits are both a cause of desertification, because they exert intense grazing pressure on the vegetation, and a symptom of desertification, as they thrive in environments desertified by their own and other influences" (Hughes 1991: 14). Rabbits are more likely to thrive in the short tussock grasslands induced by pastoralism. This is because in the damper microclimate of intact tall grasslands, rabbits are more susceptible to the fatal rabbit disease coccidiosis. In the future it is hoped that biological tools, such as Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease, will be successfully implemented to help control rabbit populations.

In addition to hieracium and rabbits, high country pastoralism is threatened by a range of other noxious weeds, including the spread of broom, gorse, nassella tussock, sweet briar, wilding trees, and the threat posed by disease carrying pests such as ferrets, opposums and wild cats. Furthermore, many farmers consider that keas endanger stock, and that Canadian geese destroy and consume precious feed.

Although there are now strict planning regulations controlling the use of grassland burning, many runholders maintain fire is a necessary tool to enhance pastoral growth, facilitate stock access and control the spread of scrub and weeds. Many farmers assert that with adequate spelling from grazing and follow-up topdressing, then fire is a natural and sustainable land management tool (Federated Farmers 1992).

Climate, rabbits, hawkweed, and other environmental factors are only part of the equation that makes high country farming a *"risky business"* (Hughes 1991: 5). As with all farming areas, economic factors such as commodity prices, cost of inputs and debt loading, exert significant pressure on the economic and environmental sustainability of pastoral farming. Unlike many other farming areas however, the high country environment is particularly fragile. In the high country there is *"much less margin for error"* (ibid).

Soil scientist Mike Float, comments that the *"management practice of grazing by domesticated stock and the practice of burning tussock and scrub (conducted in isolation and without appropriate follow-up measures) do have significant impact on soil, land and landscapes. The two processes which operate to cause deterioration in soil quality and vegetation change are nutrient removal from the ecosystem and direct adverse effect of grazing on living plants. Over time these losses accumulate and the practice is not sustainable"* (*The Press* March 24, 1995).

4.8) Economic and Environmental Sustainability?

For decades scientists have expressed concern over high country soil degradation (Buchanan 1875; Cockayne 1910; Gibbs and Raeside 1945). More recently environmental concerns have focused upon the notion of sustainability. Pastoral farming has been challenged as being economically and ecologically unsustainable (Hughes 1991; Working Party 1994). Political economic and environmental restructuring in the 1980s and 1990s have heightened calls for "sustainable management" of high country landscapes.

Economic and environmental sustainability in the high country is confounded by a lack of conclusive scientific evidence which points to the causes of land degradation. Carpenter (in Meister 1991: 52) asserts that *"it is my thesis that the ability of science is inadequate to accurately detect, much less predict, the transition from intensive but sustainable use to unacceptable degradation"*. President of the South Island High Country Committee (SIHCC), Bob Brown (pers. comm. 1995), suggests that many scientific reports (such as the *Martin Report*) oversimplify the environmental problems in the high country by applying assumptions drawn from the semi-arid zone, to the high country in general.

The Commissioner of Crown Lands (1994) suggests that the economic returns from pastoralism have been in a state of decline over the last few years. *"Data supplied from the New Zealand Meat and Wool Board's Economic Service indicate a steady decline in farm profitability and expenditure over the last four years"* (ibid: 23). The *Martin Report* found that some properties, particularly those suffering from major pest and weed management problems, were unlikely to be economically viable in the short and long term. Many of these properties were struggling from a high level of indebtedness (Commissioner of Crown Lands 1994; Working Party 1994). Of the properties funded by the former Rabbit and Land Management Programme, the *Martin Report* (Working Party 1994: 48) suggests that *"28% of farms monitored are no longer viable"* and *"44% are considered marginal"*. Many of the farms were being supported by off-farm income and through living off borrowed capital (ibid). Many high country runholders are optimistic however, that an improvement in fine wool prices, increased land use opportunities through land tenure reform, and advances in pest and weed control, will facilitate improvements in the profitability of pastoral farming (Federated Farmers 1992).

Significantly, the Martin Committee (Working Party 1994: 48) notes that *"not all high country farms are unprofitable enterprises. There are many, especially in the higher rainfall and gorge areas, that are in a sound financial position"*. At the 1995 South Island High Country Field day at the Muller Station in the Marlborough high country, it was evident that many farmers (from all over the South Island) were indignant to the belief that high country pastoralism is an uneconomic and unsustainable land use. *"There has been far too much negativity regarding the present land use of this environment, coming from many different lobby sectors. It is time that we showed that we are not raping and pillaging as some would suggest"* (Satterthwaite pers. comm. 1995).

Representatives from the local farming community showed evidence that high country pastoralism in the Upper Awatere Valley was economically profitable and ecologically sustainable. This is in spite of a history of severe pest and weed infestations and land degradation in the region. Through an intensive programme of pest and weed management and land improvements, farmers from the Upper Awatere Valley produced favourable environmental outcomes, which were accompanied by profitable economic results.

At Muller Station for example, there has been an 80% increase in the tonnage of wool produced, and 120% increase in total stock units since 1965 (Satterthwaite pers. comm. 1995). This was achieved through a comprehensive pest and weed management control plan which had enabled the station to develop into a viable and seemingly sustainable enterprise. Data accumulated by the Upper Awatere Production and Research Group (pers. comm. 1995) challenged the generalisation that high country pastoral farming is economically and environmentally unsustainable:

- *"If we are depleting our soils, why is our ground cover improving?*
- *If we are degrading our lands, why are our stock performances improving?*
- *If we are unsustainable, why do our records show otherwise?*

4.9) The Case for Change

It is important to appreciate that there are a number of internally and externally generated political economic, social and environmental forces that are influencing change in the landscapes of the South Island high country. There are a number of factors which have arisen within the high country regulatory framework itself which are seen to be in need of reform.

Although land use change has been informally accommodated under the present high country tenure regime, reform has been touted as a means to encourage more diverse and sustainable land use options. *"There is a common perception that pastoral lease and licence tenure does not easily accommodate the diverse range of commercial and non-commercial land uses... which are increasingly being recognised as sustainable land use options in the hill and high country of the South Island"* (Commissioner of Crown Lands 1994: 21).

The present high country tenure system does not clearly attribute the responsibility for management of the land between the Crown and the lessee. Consequently neither party is willing to take full responsibility for land degradation problems. The lease arrangements continue to be hindered by a lack of accountability and a tendency for each party to blame the other for ecological deterioration (Commissioner of Crown Lands 1994: 21). One high country leaseholder summarised the problem: *"who owns the rabbits?!"*.

In addition, Hide (1988) argues that secure freehold property (as opposed to leasehold) encourages farmers to take better care of their land because the land is treated as an asset from which they can derive future benefit. *"Farmers are less likely to care for their land if their property rights are uncertain"* (ibid: 5).

Despite a high degree of scientific uncertainty, there are areas of the high country which are simply no longer sustainable pastoral farming units, both economically and environmentally (Hughes 1991; Working Party 1994). Nevertheless, they remain classified as pastoral land: *"land that is suitable or adaptable primarily for pastoral purposes only"* (Committee of Inquiry 1982: 7). There are a number of interrelated causes of land degradation in the high country. Regardless of the causes, and irrespective of which group, or groups, are responsible for high country land management, the current tenure system is in need of reform. The Land Act has failed to ensure adequate *"protection and care of Crown land"* (ibid: 8), and fails to recognise a range of landscape values for which high country environments are now utilised.

In the high country pastoral lands, the government (as yet) has not successfully managed to distinguish between production and conservation objectives. Landcorp continues to administer leases, many of which include land valued for both production and nature conservation. The Government views the tenure reform process as an opportunity to clarify the land use status over high country landscapes.

Although Landcorp's function is to operate land management in a profitable and efficient manner, it currently costs more than $2 million to administer the high country leases, when it receives only $1 million in rental (Cave 1995: 105). The pastoral lease was not designed as a revenue generating device, as the nation's income was designed to be derived through pastoral production. Pastoral leases were set at a "fair price" in order to cover administrative costs, and to encourage tenants to reinvest capital in farm improvements. Consequently, high country leaseholders have escaped paying a market rental.

The Land Act was changed in 1979 so that when the 33 year lease term expires, rent is reviewable every 11 years. Although rent is now set at 2.5% of the land value, the rent for a pastoral lease only moves up to that level gradually, with the result that most runholders still pay rent at 1.5% of the land value. Because the Crown only owns the land, and not the improvements on it (such as fencing, roads, buildings and fertilised pasture), rent is set at a relatively low level. Even selling the land will not create a significant source of income for the Crown, because when leaseholders give up their perpetual leases on the land they return to the Crown, they receive a credit to be used to buy land they choose in replacement (ibid: 109). In effect, the taxpayer contributes more than $1 million per year to maintain pastoral stewardship of the high country. As a consequence, the government has a strong financial incentive to relinquish its role in the management of pastoral leases, which are currently uneconomic to administer.

The current legislative framework does not acknowledge a diverse range of landscape values for which parts of the high country are valued. Of particular concern to many conservation groups, is that the 1948 Land Act does not explicitly recognise conservation values. As a result of a number of challenges by runholders to DOC and Landcorp for declining burning permits, the Commissioner of Crown Lands (1994) has accepted legal opinion that some public interest values are *ultra vires* (beyond the powers of) the Land Act 1948. Accordingly, several interest groups are eager to see that conservation values are recognised and adhered to in the regulatory framework.

4.10) Recent History of Pastoral Lease Tenure Reform

In 1982 the Government set up a Committee of Inquiry to review the administration of Crown land held in pastoral lease and determine whether or not the leasehold system remained an effective policy. Headed by W.G. Clayton, the Clayton Committee reported that the classification of "pastoral land" was outdated and no longer serving the purpose that was intended under the 1948 Land Act; to conserve high country land for pastoral production. The review recommended that the pastoral lease should be phased out and that land suitable for agricultural production be made available for freeholding, land of high conservation value be reserved, and that a third category of land (with conservation and production values) be retained in Crown ownership and managed for multiple use (Committee of Inquiry 1982).

In parts of the high country, Crown ownership was no longer deemed necessary to conserve soil quality and provide land for productive use.

Although successive governments endorsed the principles of the Clayton Report, no statutory change occurred. For a variety of reasons, including environmental restructuring in the 1980s, the implications of Ngai Tahu's claim to the high country, and a lack of political will to tackle high country problems, a number of governments avoided undertaking pastoral lease reform.

In 1988 a government task group was appointed to develop a statutory reform process which would support the recommendations of the Clayton Report. In 1989 the group released a "land categorisation" proposal, in which it was suggested that high country pastoral land be divided between: "farm land", available for freeholding; "restricted use land", retained in Crown ownership and lease tenure for a range of production and conservation values; and "conservation land", to be assigned to the Crown estate. Upon a change of government in 1990 however, plans to implement the land categorisation proposal lapsed (Commissioner of Crown Lands 1994).

In 1994, the Commissioner of Crown Lands issued a report which reiterated the need for comprehensive tenure reform in the high country. The *Tenure of Crown Pastoral Land* outlined a number of options for tenure reform. The report was supported by the *South Island High Country Review* (Working Party 1994) which concluded the present pastoral lease tenure system had proved ineffective in ensuring sustainability, and that tenure reform would *"greatly assist in the rehabilitation of degraded lands"* (Denis Marshall in *The Dominion* June 13, 1995).

4.12) Tenure Reform

As a result of a number of government reviews which have largely been supported by the desires interest groups for change in the high country, a tenure reform process was officially established in 1994. Tenure reform is a voluntary process which provides the opportunity for pastoral leaseholders to freehold those parts of their leasehold which are considered suitable for sustainable commercial land use, with the balance being assigned to the conservation estate and/ or placed under a special lease or protection covenant.

Tenure review involves a 32-step process which is based upon negotiations between the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Landcorp, DOC, lessees and iwi (Note Appendix 1). The review operates on a property by property basis with the Crown purporting to represent the "public interest", and then negotiating with the lessee. Deciding where the boundaries lie between conservation and production land is determined following field inspections by DOC and Landcorp staff, assessment of ecological, cultural, historic, and existing pastoral values, consultation with non-governmental organisations, negotiations with the lessee, and public submissions on proposals. The is designed to identify areas which could be freeholded, or returned to Crown control for management by DOC, or remain in Crown ownership and continue to be grazed under a special lease.

As a result of the reform process, Minister of Lands and Minister for Conservation Denis Marshall, envisages that up to one million hectares of high country pastoral land is likely to be assigned to the conservation estate (Marshall in *The Dominion* June 13, 1995). Mr Marshall regards the reform process as an exchange of interests between the Crown and runholder: *"The Crown seeks to protect public interest values in conservation, recreation, public access and landscape values. The runholders seek to maximise their interests and secure freehold title to land, in exchange for giving up the rights to permanent leases so as to give them more security in their business ventures"* (*The Press* March 23, 1995). If a leaseholder is not interested in partaking in the tenure reform process, then their lease will continue to be managed largely as it has been, subject to legislative change.

In order to give the reform process statutory backing, the Government introduced the Crown Pastoral Land Bill to Parliament in April 1995. The Crown Pastoral Land Bill stands to repeal the Land Act 1948 (and its subsequent amendments), and replace the legislative emphasis of management for "pastoral purposes only" to "sustainable land use". The Government is presently working through submissions on the Bill.

To date, 10 high country properties have been reviewed with the result that approximately 27, 031 ha of land has been freeholded, approximately 21,233 ha has been transferred to the conservation estate, and approximately 4, 294 ha remains under some form of lease arrangement (administered by DOC or Landcorp). There are approximately 60 properties which are in the process of being reviewed (Gullen pers. comm. 1995).

One of the first properties to have undergone the tenure review process is Dingleburn Station, near Lake Hawea. Dingleburn has been through a range of negotiations. Under the initial proposal, 17, 000ha, out of 23, 707 ha was to be assigned to DOC. This left approximately 6, 000 ha for the lessee to freehold. The runholder, Mr Guy Mead was dissatisfied with the proposal and sought a significant increase in the land available for freeholding. A second proposal increased the freehold area to 10, 238 ha, and 13, 469 ha has been designated for conservation management by DOC. Within the DOC land there is to be limited grazing on some areas for 11 to 20 years, with the idea being to develop the lower country and eventually withdraw from the higher slopes. Mr Mead comments that *"if there is any truth in the statement that continued grazing of native land is unsustainable, it is imperative this land stays in station ownership so income from other land uses, such as commercial recreation, helps to maintain financial stability while taking the pressure off grazing"* (*New Zealand Farmer* June 15, 1995). A National Trust covenant plan has been initiated over much of Dingleburn, which is aimed to provide public access and protect conservation values. In the future, Mr Mead is interested in developing a private conservation and recreation park over parts of the station (ibid).

Denis Marshall, regards the present pastoral lease system as *"outdated, unable to cope with the complexities of new stakeholders and unsympathetic to the belief that large areas of those amazing landscapes should not be left to the mercy of the merino"* (*The Press* March 23, 1995). Tenure reform presents the opportunity to construct a more appropriate management strategy which better reflects the diverse characteristics of different high country regions. The present structure does not distinguish between different classes of land or the differences between high country regions, for example between the dry arid rangelands of Central Otago, and the more temperate climate of the Upper Waimakariri Basin.

By acknowledging these differences, a more diverse range of land uses can be developed locally which better reflect the range of commercial and non-commercial interests for which high country landscapes are valued. For example, a station in the Upper Waimakariri Basin may be able to take advantage of the recreational opportunities and tourist market for the region. These options however, may not be available to a runholder in Central Otago, who alternatively, may seek to develop an agroforestry, or horticultural scheme, which are not viable in other high country areas.

The change in the regulatory framework reflects a move away from a universal modernist reading of the high country landscape. Tenure reform reflects the way in which the landscapes of the high country are valued for a diverse range of uses. Whereas the high country were once managed largely in terms of its value for one purpose, high country pastoral lands are now utilised for a variety of different land uses and values (Note Figure 3.5). Tenure reform provides the opportunity to find resolutions to high country conflicts which are contextually based, and which recognise the multiplicity of values for different high country regions.

4.12) Ideology behind Reform

The process of high country tenure reform has arisen amidst a context in which the State has sought to reduce its role in commercial land use. Treasury has played a major part in influencing policy by advocating the adoption of market forces. New right economic principles assert that private ownership of resources, supported by secure rights to property, lead to the most efficient use of resources. Private property rights are upheld as a means to encourage better husbandry, based on the belief that land owners are more likely to take responsibility for what they own (Hide 1988; Ackroyd 1991; Buhrs and Bartlett 1993). The economic and environmental reforms of the 1980s were based upon a belief that market forces, as set by "economic realities", will lead to the most efficient use of resources, bringing about favourable environmental outcomes for the greater benefit of society (Ackroyd 1991; Memon 1993).

The tenure reform process is consistent with the Government's desire to release the State's productive assets for what is perceived to be their more efficient use by the private sector. Denis Marshall comments that *"the pastoral lease is by far the largest block of productive land left in Crown ownership and I strongly believe it is time to do a decent sized divvy-up of the resource and get the government out of owning productive land"* (Ansley 1994: 24). Furthermore, the Government's desire to reduce its responsibility for the management of pastoral leases is heightened by the fact that it is uneconomic to administer the pastoral leases.

4.13) Conflict of Interests

High country conflicts represent a clash of values between different interests competing for the perceived benefits accrued from the use and control of these symbolic and material landscapes.

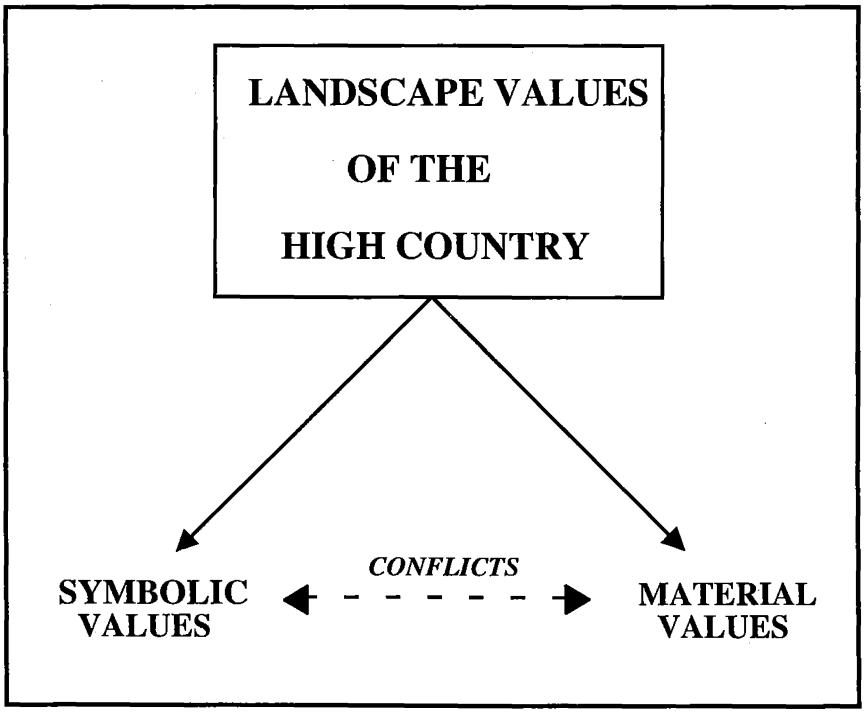


Figure 4.3: Conflict of Values in High Country Landscapes

Amidst a political economic and cultural context where increasing importance is attributed to sustainable management of natural and physical resources, the preservation of high country environments has attracted considerable attention. Over the last two decades, conflicts have escalated between runholders and public interest groups. Conservation and recreation interest groups are concerned that farming has "devastated" much of the high country environment. Conservationists and recreationists are determined to maintain public ownership and control of high country areas with "significant" conservation values, and to ensure legal public access to high country lands and waters for recreational use (RFBPS 1995). High country farmers are essentially concerned with preserving their way of life and their business interests. Farmers maintain they are worthy stewards of the high country environment and it is in their interests to protect the land that they rely on for their livelihood.

As Crown Pastoral Land Bill undergoes consideration by Parliamentary select committees, some interest groups are suspicious with the manner in which the reforms have proceeded. *"Past frustrations with real or imagined difficulties of access to land's suitable for recreation has led to common cause between recreationists and preservationists"* (O'Connor 1980: 185). Conservation and recreational interest groups, (including the RFBPS, Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC), New Zealand Deer Stalkers Association, New Zealand Fish and Game Council and Public Access New Zealand), have banded together to form a coalition, the High Country Public Lands Campaign (HCPLC), to oppose the Crown Pastoral Land Bill in its present form.

The HCPLC believes that tenure reform can be accommodated by reforming the 1948 Land Act, and only allowing freeholding on land considered suitable for farming (as opposed to any sustainable commercial land use). The HCPLC is concerned that the Bill will ensure widespread privatization in the high country which will compromise public interest goals such as conservation and recreation opportunities. The HCPLC believes the Bill stands to increase lessees' rights over public land by allowing extensive freeholding of substantial areas of the high country for commercial land use.

President of FMC, Hugh Barr (*The Dominion* June 3, 1995), states *"the Government seems intent on stealing New Zealand's high country heritage from the public for no other reason than to curry favour with the 341 lessees and overseas interests. Naturally, there has been no outcry from the lessees, as Mr Marshall's proposal would give them massive new rights and expectations".*

Whereas farmers are concerned with maintaining production values in the high country, several public interest groups are demanding that as a national icon, the landscapes of the high country should be managed primarily for conservation. This clash of values between high country leaseholders and public interest groups has manifested itself in an ongoing debate over the control and use of high country landscapes. Furthermore, this conflict is complicated by additional issues. As tangata whenua (people of the land, inhabitants) and original "owners" of the high country, Ngai Tahu have recently been involved in an attempt to regain control of high country areas of historical and cultural significance. Additionally, the purchase of pastoral leases by foreign investors has fuelled debate regarding the control and ownership over parts of the high country. Public interest groups are concerned that privatization, foreign ownership and Maori control of high country land, will restrict opportunities for (the rest of) public use of the high country. These conflicts are examined in more detail in the following chapters.

Nature conservation interest groups have lobbied for State ownership and control of high country lands with the expectation that it will restrict private exploitation, curtail environmental degradation, and give recognition to public interest values. Greater government ownership is however, in direct conflict with the current freeholding process where tenure is made more secure in order to encourage improved economic and environmental outcomes.

Hide (1988) claims that when interest groups such as environmentalists demand their "rights" be recognised, they are simply demanding that their values be favoured over the interests of other groups. Ackroyd (1991: 5) contends that *"environmentalists misapprehend the effects of the policies they advocate. This land* (the high country) *was most abused in the last century when rental arrangements allowed no right of renewal and provided no incentive for runholders to leave grazing for an incoming tenant".*

Ackroyd (ibid) asserts that private ownership together with market forces will allow greater economic and environmental efficiency, and therefore provide greater benefits for all to society. Nevertheless, market forces are poorly equipped to represent a range of landscape values in the high country, particularly conservation values which bear no direct financial benefit.

The difficulty with contemporary economic ideology is that economic sustainability is valued ahead of ecological sustainability. Unsustainable systems which reap short term financial gains are more profitable than sustainable environmental systems. Contemporary economic ideology and its application seriously overlooks and undervalues major ecological concerns. Goodland and Ledec (in Meister 1991: 53) suggest that *"the economic values of environmental services, while very real, are systematically underestimated in cost-benefit analysis. 'Intangible' environmental benefits, such as those derived from the preservation of biological diversity, are recognised even less in economic analysis"*.

4.14) Tenure Reform - Opportunity for Resolution?

Johnston (1987) argues that place plays a significant role in the resolution of conflict. He argues that many problems do not have ready-made solutions available because there is often no single, right answer that can be identified and imposed (usually by governments). Johnston suggests that conflicts can be resolved by developing a process which fosters locally based understandings. *"Understanding is necessary for the resolution of conflict, and it is clear that the world is full of conflicts that are calling for resolution... Those conflicts are between people, people who become what they are in places: to understand the people involved in conflicts, we must understand the places that made them, and the places that they are making"* (ibid: 30). Johnston's views have significant implications for the resolution of high country conflicts.

The tenure review process has been touted as a means to construct a tenure arrangement which better reflects the multiplicity of values for high country landscapes. By carrying out the review on a voluntary property by property basis, the process recognises the differences in characteristics, opportunities, and values between different high country regions, and within each property.

Reform provides the opportunity to clarify responsibility for land management, which is presently obscured between the Crown and leaseholder. Alongside the proposed legislative changes, the review process provides the consultative means by which there can be public involvement in identifying "public interest" goals for the protection of high country landscapes (DOC 1994). As most of the interest groups are frustrated by the present tenure system, reclassification of pastoral land is based ideally as a win/ win process. Conservationist and recreational lobbyist, Brian Turner, states *"conservation values would be better protected, the public's recreational and other interests would be secured and often enhanced, and farmers and others would be able to get on with diversifying and optimising the land's productive potential"* (RFBPS, November 1994: 2).

Many farmers are enthusiastic about the opportunity to freehold significant parts of their properties. Farmers believe freehold tenure enhances a sense of responsibility for the land and provides greater confidence for farm investment. Although Federated Farmers are in favour of the Crown Pastoral Land Bill and the current tenure reform proposals, President of the SIHCC, Bob Brown (pers. comm. 1995), admits that some high country farmers are suspicious of the changes that may occur. Some high country leaseholders are reluctant to change their present farming operations and some may not be prepared, or will not be able to afford freeholding, particularly when they are content with the current concessional rental system. As a whole however, the SIHCC (Federated Farmers 1995) believes the reform process will be:

> "*Good for the natural environment;*
> *Good for sustainable land use;*
> *Good for public access to recreational areas of the high country;*
> *Good for the farming families directly involved".*

It remains to be seen whether the competing values for high country landscapes can be reconciled within an ongoing process of tenure reform.

4.15) Conclusion

"It is imperative that environmental policies reflect the full range of diverse human needs that depend for fulfilment upon the environment; these include psychological, economic, social, aesthetic and recreational needs. Hitherto, governments have either ignored or only partially recognised the wide spectrum of values that people seek in the environment" (Memon 1993: 15). Landscape means many different things to different people. There are many different high countries, with different realities and different contexts (Note 4.4). When different sets of values compete for the control of a finite resource, there are conflicts. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity to reconcile these differences within the tenure review process by acknowledging and providing for a diverse range of local and regional perspectives.

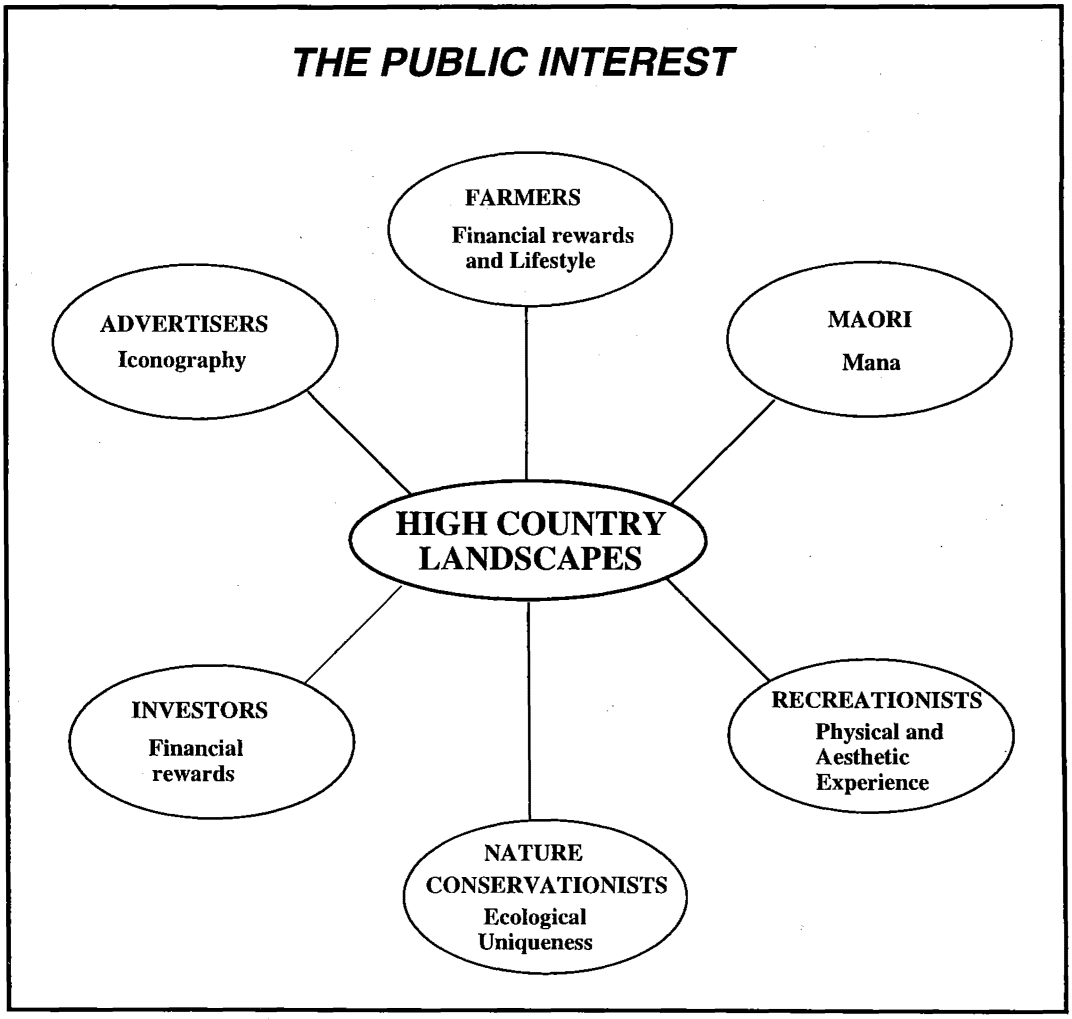


Figure 4.4: Different Perspectives in the High Country

High country conflicts have become apparent amidst a changing political economic, environmental and cultural context. As New Zealand becomes increasingly linked to the global economy there have been growing concerns with economic and environmental sustainability. The reform process needs to recognise the postmodern context in which the present conflicts occur. This means that policy needs to reflect the multitude of voices for which the high country landscapes are valued. These "voices" are likely to have been influenced in terms of not just the international and national context, but also the local context. Hence, in order to address the inherent local scale of many of the conflicts, solutions need to be forged locally, as well as nationally.

It is necessary to emphasise that the high country conflicts are not just a result of outdated legislation, or a lack of fiscal and environmental accountability. Nor are they simply a clash between production and conservation interests. At the basis of these conflicts is the contest between those who hold symbolic and material attachments to land. Having foreshadowed the contexts and issues upon which conflicts of the high country landscapes have arisen, an examination of some key issues can be investigated more specifically. In particular, Chapter Five introduces a study area from which a number of key conflicts can be examined in more depth.

Chapter Five

Field Area - Upper Waimakariri and Upper Rakaia Basins

5.1) Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the Rakaia and Waimakariri high country landscapes as the research area for a number of case studies. In order to gain a better understanding of the landscape values for high country environments, a study area was selected to examine some key conflicts at a local scale. The objective of carrying out research in a defined area is to provide insights into issues which recur throughout the high country.

The field area focuses upon the high country lands between the Rakaia and Waimakariri rivers (Figure 5.1). This region was selected for a number of reasons. In many respects the Upper Waimakariri and Rakaia Basins are broadly representative of much of the South Island high country. Upon closer examination however, the region holds a number of unique characteristics that distinguishes it from other high country districts, and thus allows for an examination of differences. Dominy (1993a) suggests that an exploration of difference, both from within and outside the object of study, can provide valuable social understandings. *"The community must be defined in relation to 'other' voices, its signification resting not only on a contained self but on its relational difference from the identities within and around it"* (ibid: 330).

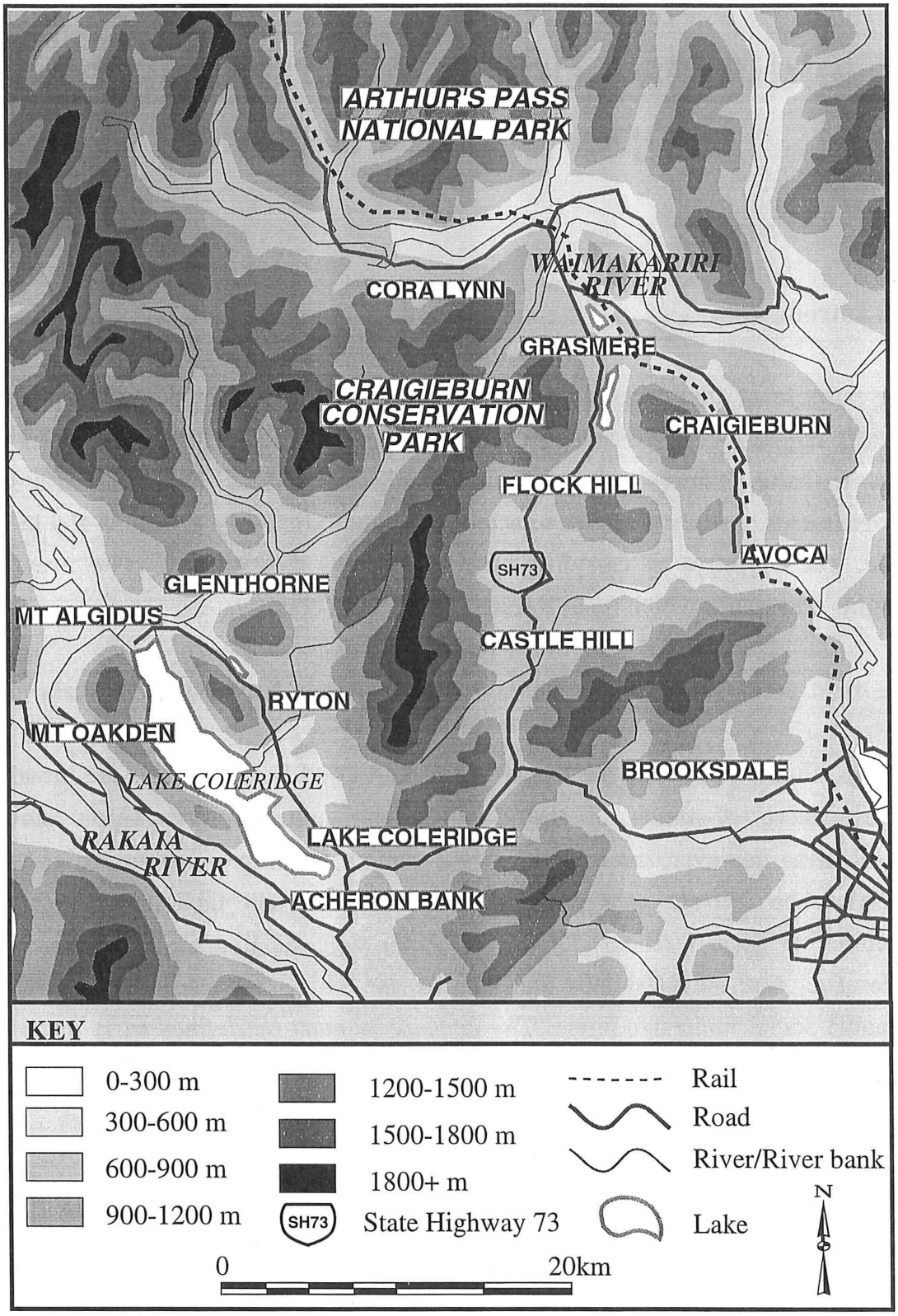


Figure 5.1 Research Area: The Waimakariri and Rakaia High Country Landscapes

5.2) In the Field

The study area contained 14 high country properties. The benefits of investigating a small number of high country properties allowed for an in-depth examination of the issues. It was necessary to restrict the size and extent of the study area because of the complexity and multitude of issues involved in high country management, particularly with the current reforms. The disadvantages were that 14 properties were a small proportion of the 341 leases in the South Island high country. Nevertheless, the study area was selected (initially) as being broadly representative of other high country regions. However, it became evident that there were many features that distinguished the field area from other high country communities.

Field research was based on interviews conducted with a range of interested parties, including runholders. One of the runholding families were not interested in assisting with my research. This was unfortunate, particularly because the property is one of the first high country stations in Canterbury currently undergoing negotiations for tenure reform. Nevertheless, regional officer for Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, Eugenie Sage (pers. comm. 1995), expressed optimism that there would be recreational and conservation gains for the public from the tenure review of this particular station.

Another runholder was unable to be contacted. By interviewing other runholders however, I gathered that the leaseholder was a prominent Christchurch businessman who maintained a family stake in the property largely for recreational purposes, particularly hunting. Because of steep slopes and (as one farmer put it) *"plenty of scrub"*, much of the property is considered unsuitable for grazing. Despite this, it is currently used by a neighbouring farmer through an informal arrangement as grazing land in the summer months.

In the process of arranging interviews an attempt was made to meet with both husband and wife, where applicable. This is important in order to gauge (what was assumed to be) both of the household's decision makers' attitudes. In the case of five properties, both husband and wife were able to be interviewed. Naturally, on some issues there was a difference of opinion between the partners. On the whole however, the views of both husband and wife were similar to each other, or if they disagreed they would not do so in front of me.

However, in the process of arranging interviews I was often referred to the male "head" of the household, and it was assumed I was not so interested in what the female's opinion would be. For example, on several occasions contact was made the wife on the telephone who would pass me on to the husband. In some cases, there was only one principal decision maker as the leaseholder was unmarried. In some circumstances it was not practical to meet with both husband and wife, because one of them was too busy, particularly as interviews were often time consuming, lasting between 30 minutes and 3 hours.

The majority of runholders interviewed were between 40 - 65 years of age. On a couple of occasions however, I talked to relatively young farm managers aged between 20 and 30 years of age.

In order to preserve their anonymity, I have protected the identities of the runholders interviewed. Of the twelve interviews, ten were carried out on the runholder's property in the field area. Two interviews were carried out in Christchurch (while the lessees were visiting). Interviews were based upon an informal semi-structured questionnaire. The objectives of the interviews were to gain an understanding of the runholders' relationship (historic and economic) with the high country, their land use patterns, values towards the landscape, and their attitudes toward (and contact with) other interest groups in the management of high country environments. Of particular interest was the lessees' responses to the current reform process.

A pilot interview was arranged with a runholding family in the field area. This initial interview served as an introduction to some of the issues concerning high country people, and was invaluable in shaping the effectiveness of other interviews. Contact was made with the lessees by letter of introduction and by telephone. Having introduced myself and my interests in the high country, all of the interviewees were forthcoming in their responses. One runholder commented that most lessees had *"radical views, they just weren't prepared to vocalise them"*. I found however, that nearly all the respondents seemed forthright with their answers. Many were eager for me to understand the high country conflicts *"from a farmer's perspective"*. One runholder felt that it was vital to *"educate the young people in order for the wider public to understand the real issues involved in the high country"*.

Thus several farmers were more than willing to express their views openly. This was reflected for example by some runholders entrusting me with information which was potentially commercially sensitive (particularly regarding tourist developments). Additionally, many lessees were prepared to openly criticise other interest groups, and in some cases other high country farmers.

The runholders interviewed appeared knowledgeable on the variety of issues facing farming in high country landscapes, particularly regarding issues affecting land management. Some runholders were more interested in the tenure reform process than others, particularly on Crown rather than University leases, as they were more likely to be affected by changes in the short term. Several lessees appreciated that it was in their own (social and financial) interests to be well-informed on the current issues, particularly if they were to take advantage of changes (including technological innovations, scientific research, land use regulation, and commodity price fluctuations).

Runholders based their knowledge upon a variety of sources. Through conversing with neighbours, attending local meetings, and reading farming magazines, many lessees appeared to have a wide ranging knowledge of the issues affecting land use in high country environments. Many lessees had either read or were aware of scientific reports, such as the *Martin Report,* which often held important implications for pastoral farming.

For some runholders, landcare groups are a valuable source of information and a means to share knowledge with other local farmers. Landcare groups operate on a local and informal basis throughout New Zealand and are designed to help community empowerment (Garden 1992). In high country regions, the South Island High Country Committee (SIHCC) has encouraged local communities to set up landcare groups in order to deal with local issues relating to land management, and as a means to lobby politicians and land use planners. Landcare groups are encouraged to cooperate with scientific agencies to facilitate a better understanding of some of the issues affecting high country farming. In addition to landcare groups, Federated Farmers and the SIHCC organise local and national meetings designed to inform and empower high country runholders. The SIHCC helps organise the annual South Island High Country Field Day, which is keenly participated in by high country farmers from all over the South Island.

The following section examines the natural and social settings of the study area in more detail.

5.3) Natural Characteristics

Hayward and Boffa (1972:4) regard much of the Upper Waimakariri and Rakaia high country as *"a region of steep mountains, sprawling fans, smooth terraces and wide river beds. It is an area of contrasts: of rain forests and impoverished grasslands, of spectacular erosion and green paddocks, of pleasant hillside streams and raging mountain torrents"*. The study area ranges in altitude from approximately 200 metres above sea level in the ancient glacial and river valley floors, to more than 2, 000 metres in the alpine rangelands. Paleological evidence suggests that much of the area was once extensively forested, but following the combined pressure of climatic change and natural fires, developed into native scrub and tussock grassland (Molloy 1963).

The transformation of extensive areas of the high country to open grassland was accelerated by fires caused by Maori settlers, and more recently by European pastoralists (Cumberland 1981; O'Connor 1986). Mountain beech forests still remain on many slopes, particularly in the Craigieburn Range. There are a variety of small lakes and wetlands in the valley floors, and Lake Coleridge is situated in a large former glacial trough. Much of the region is now vegetated by a range of pastoral grass species. There are a number of small commercial exotic tree plantations, as well as plantings around homesteads, shelterbelts in the valley floors, and trial plantations associated with the Forest Research Institute in the Craigieburn Range.

The region's climate is characterised by north west winds, especially during spring which brings moderate amounts of rain, particularly in the west. The eastern slopes receive variable amounts of rain associated with southerlies. There are regular snowfalls during the winter. The Rakaia and Waimakariri high country has a mean average rainfall which ranges from approximately 3, 000mm in the west to 1, 500mm in the east (Department of Conservation (DOC) 1990). Rainfall is relatively high and is advantageous for vegetation growth and soil development, particularly compared to some other high country regions such as the Molesworth (600-900mm), and parts of Central Otago and the McKenzie Basin (approximately 500mm) (Department of Statistics 1995).

5.4) Social Characteristics

The Upper Waimakariri and Rakaia Basins are sparsely populated. Apart from a number of homesteads and farm cottages, many of the residential buildings are used for recreational accommodation, such as Castle Hill Village. Nearby settlements include Arthur's Pass to the north, Springfield to the south east, and further east the city of Christchurch (note Figure 1.1). The region comprises a range of land tenure arrangements including pastoral leasehold land, freehold land, Crown land designated for conservation, botanic and scenic reserves, as well as university endowment land. To the north of the field area lies Arthur's Pass National Park (114,000 hectares), and within the field area lies the 45, 000 hectare Craigieburn Conservation Park, which are both administered by DOC. Apart from Crown land administered by the DOC, Selwyn District Council holds responsibility for local land use planning, and the Canterbury Regional Council is responsible for the management of all natural and physical resources within the area.

Many of the study area's natural features and characteristics are regarded as ecologically and aesthetically unique. As well as Arthur's Pass National Park and the Craigieburn Conservation Park, there are a number of reserves which protect some of the region's natural features, including the Castle Hill Flora Reserve for the mountain buttercup and forget-me-not, and Castle Hill Scenic Reserve for the limestone formations.

Unlike some remote high country regions, much of the field area has historically held convenient access. There is a modern state highway (State highway 73) and railway which crosses through the Waimakariri Basin. A rail link was established between the West Coast and Christchurch in 1923, and was an important feature for the development of the Upper Waimakariri Basin (Watters 1965). However, since the improvement of the road network, particularly in the 1960s, the railway has declined in significance relative to the amount of road transport. Both road and rail links are still subject to intermittent closures as a result of climatic and seismic events.

Due to its close proximity to a large urban centre (Christchurch) and its accessibility, the Rakaia and Waimakariri high country has historically been popular for recreational use. Furthermore, the area is well documented by scientists, journalists and writers. There is a University research station at Cass, and an environmental education centre in the Craigieburn Conservation park. Hayward and Boffa (1972: 4) describe the Upper Waimakariri Basin, as *"the best documented area of mountain land in New Zealand".*

The University of Canterbury is one of the largest land owners in the Canterbury high country. Altogether it owns or administers more than 70, 000ha in the high country, of which a significant proportion lies within the Rakaia and Waimakariri Basins (note Table 5.1). As a means to facilitate funding, the University was endowed with significant land holdings in 1876 following the dissolution of Provincial Governments. Although the University has sold much of its lowland areas (it currently retains 509ha) it continues to own and administer high country pastoral leases, much in the same manner as does the Crown (Martin pers. comm. 1995).

Despite its significant land holdings, the University currently receives approximately only $40, 000 per year in rental from its high country properties. Some members of the University Council are understood to be interested in selling the University's high country land in order to invest the money more profitably elsewhere. Additionally, several leaseholders have applied pressure to the University to sell them the freehold title (Ansley 1994). The Inspector of Reserves for the University, Mr Phillip Martin, suggests that the University is yet to determine the future of its management role in the high country (pers. comm. 1995).

Much of the Upper Waimakariri Basin has been designated as a scenic corridor. The scenic corridor is a concept designed to guide the manner in which land use is carried out within the region (Bennett and Lucas 1992). The Upper Waimakariri Basin Landscape Corridor is a concept unique to the region and was developed because the area is considered to be *"of major scenic importance requiring special attention to ensure that proposed uses or developments do not detract from the visual character of the landscape"* (ibid: 5).

The implications of the scenic corridor are explored more specifically in Chapter Eight. A similar landscape corridor concept is also being considered for application to the Lake Coleridge district (Lucas pers. comm. 1995). But what makes this region any more "special" than any other landscape? This is in part due to its accessibility and the multiplicity of uses for which the region is valued.

5.5) Length of Tenure

High country farming regions have often been depicted as stable communities, with the leasehold remaining in family hands and few changes of ownership. *"Inheriting the opportunity to farm by purchasing a lease from parents is a central part of high country life, and continuity is vital to the maintenance of high country identity and tradition"* (Dominy 1993a: 320). A family tradition of high country farming is reflected in the study area.

Out of the twelve properties from which a response was gained, only two of the runholding families had recently become residents in the region. In one case the runholders bought the leasehold in 1990 ago after selling a large hill country farm in Canterbury. Both husband and wife knew the area well as they had worked on farms in the region before they married. The other "newcomers" to the region are "environmental entrepreneurs" Gerry McSweeney and Anne Saunders, and their in-laws Paul and Ann Jarman. They bought Cora Lynn Station in 1994. McSweeney and Saunders are in the process of setting up an international ecotourist operation, while the Jarmans are responsible for farm management (Ansley 1994).

The remainder of the runholders respondents have all farmed in the Upper Rakaia and Waimakariri region for more than 10 years, and in many cases continued a family tradition of high country farming. For example, Lake Coleridge Station has belonged to the Murchison family for more than 100 years. Brooksdale is presently farmed by the Milliken family, and has been so since 1901 when John Milliken (the present owner's great-grandfather) bought it upon his arrival from Northern Ireland (Acland 1951). Another one of the properties has been leased by the same family since 1917. The male runholder commented that he came to have a stake in the property when he *"married the boss's daughter"*.

5.6) Is there a High Country "Community"?

The SIHCC claims that the greatest resource of the high country is its *"community"* (Federated Farmers 1992). To some extent there are a number of common interests which unite high country farmers, for example their collective desire to achieve environmentally sustainable land management (despite different perspectives regarding the means to achieve it). This was evident at for example the 1995 High Country Field Day, where many farmers from different areas of the high country had gathered to learn and contribute to the issues (political, economic, social and environmental) affecting farming in high country environments.

Within the research area there was some indifference to the idea of a high country community. One runholder felt that although his family knew all the other local farmers and residents, most lessees kept to themselves. *"We* (the local community) *have no centre point and are very individualistic. This alters however, in any problems which affect us and we are not slow to help when this is needed".*

The runholders held a variety of attitudes toward other high country communities. One runholder felt that high country farmers are very similar to each other because of the harsh living conditions many endure. High country people are *"a special breed... who hold a tremendous affection towards the land".* Apart from environmental differences, one lessee felt the region was no more unique or different to most other high country communities. Conversely, one farmer claimed that many high country areas are different, both socially and environmentally.

Having farmed in both districts, one lessee suggested there are differences between the Upper Waimakariri Basin and the Upper Rakaia Basin. They claimed that the Upper Waimakariri Basin is made up more of runholders with an individualistic viewpoint who are *"in it for themselves".* The lessee suggested that one would get a better perspective on high country farming attitudes in the Rakaia high country. This was because many of the runholders and their families had lived there for longer and were more interested in farming, as opposed to *"money making tourist ventures".*

Several farmers suggested that there was *"more of a community"* in the Upper Rakaia. This was displayed by the landcare groups. In the Upper Rakaia high country, the local landcare group is well established and keenly participated in by all the local farmers. One runholder (from the Waimakariri Basin) described it as one of the most effective landcare groups in the country. In comparison, the Upper Waimakariri Basin landcare group operates on an intermittent basis, and several runholders expressed disinterest in the landcare concept.

One lessee accepted that there was a "farming community" in the high country, but that it consisted of a diversity of values. She suggested that several local people held an interest in the Upper Waimakariri high country for the financial incentives of tourism, rather than the lifestyle benefits of farming. The lessee suggested that there were many symbolic images of the high country which high country farmers accepted, and this portrayed a sense of commonality. *"If people buy into the myth, then they have to perpetuate it, through for example sending their kids to private schools and driving four-wheel-drive cars"*. Some of the similarities and differences within high country landscapes are examined further in the following chapters.

5.7) Land Use

Pastoral runs were first established in the Rakaia and Waimakariri high country in the 1850s (Acland 1951). Maori use and values for the region were either ignored or extinguished by the "purchase" of Ngai Tahu lands by the Crown in 1848. Fire was used extensively to clear the land of vegetation inedible to sheep and promote the growth of palatable short tussock grassland feed. As with the rest of the South Island high country, pastoralism became entrenched as the dominant land use within the region. Historically the Rakaia and Waimakariri high country (as with much of the high country landscapes) has been valued primarily in terms of its worth for pastoral production. More recently however, there has been growing interest for a range of alternative commercial and non-commercial land uses, including tourism, recreation, conservation and scenic preservation.

Interviews with the runholders provided an understanding of their land use activities and their attitudes towards land use diversification. Several runholders commented that they were looking forward to take up opportunities to diversify their land use, and in some cases lessees had already taken up measures to diversify income. A summary of the runholders tenure and land use activities is provided in Table 5.1. Without exception, the primary farming land use in the area is fine wool production. Some properties have small numbers of sheep for meat production, and several have significant numbers of cattle. For several runholders, tourism was being developed as a major income earner.

STATION	LEASE	FREEHOLD	LEASEHOLD	STOCK	OTHER
Cora Lynn	Crown	170ha	2 000ha	3500 sheep 60 cattle	Developing eco-tourist operation
Grasmere	University	600ha	430ha	2600 sheep 200 cattle 200 deer	Tourist lodge
Craigieburn	University		12 150ha	11000 sheep 190 cattle	
Brooksdale	Crown	1 200ha	8 000ha	9800 sheep 4470 cattle	25ha commercial forestry
Flock Hill	University	12ha	13 960ha	12000 sheep 50 cattle 440 deer	Tourist facilities Forestry block
Castle Hill	Crown	350ha	11 000ha	6500 sheep 200 cattle	
Lake Coleridge	University	1 860 ha	2 800ha	6200 sheep 150 cattle	
Acheron Bank	University	1 000ha	1 200ha	5500 sheep 150 cattle 20 goats	
Ryton	University	440ha	14 600ha	19000 sheep	Tourist development
Mt Oakden	Crown		3 460ha	3600 sheep 170 cattle	
Mt Algidus	Crown	700ha	21420ha	17000 sheep 200 cattle	40ha commercial forestry
Glenthorne	Crown	240ha	10520ha	9000sheep 300 cattle	

Table 5.1: Land Use Summary for High Country Properties within Research Area

(The table was compiled from interviews with runholders)

The Rakaia and Waimakariri high country has an established recreational tradition. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, recreationists (predominantly from the Canterbury region) utilised the local high country environments, particularly for tramping and hunting. Arthur's Pass National Park was gazetted in 1929, and in 1967 Craigieburn Forest Park was established. Following the development of Mt Cheeseman in 1929, there are now five skifields in the region. The region is used extensively for a range of recreational activities as depicted in Figure 5.2.

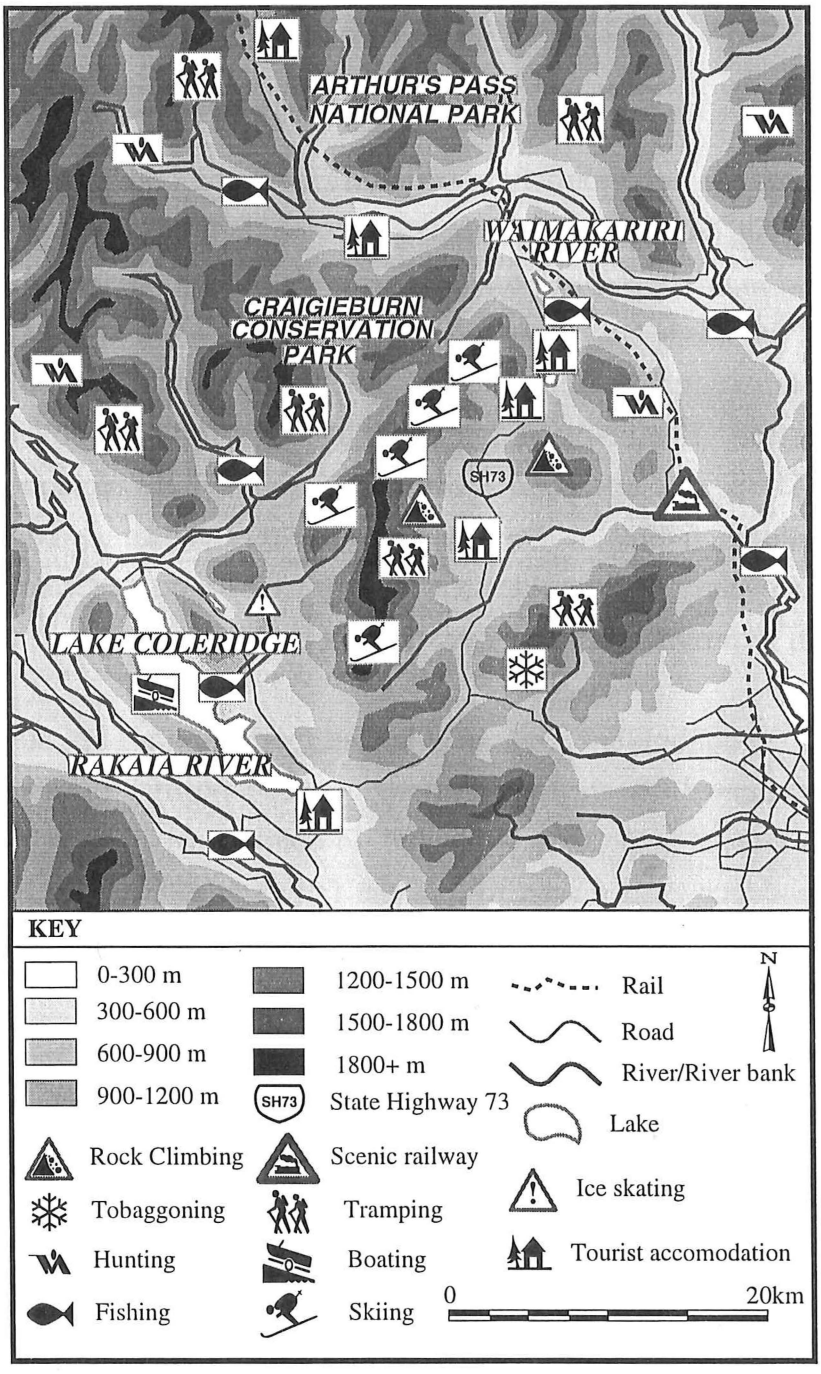


Figure 5.2: Recreational Activities and Facilities in the Upper Waimakariri and Upper Rakaia High Country

5.8) Growth of Tourism

The region has become utilised for a variety of land use interests and values. Although pastoralism has traditionally been the dominant productive land use in the area, there has been growing tourism development, particularly in the last twenty years. Unlike some more remote high country regions, the Upper Waimakariri and Rakaia district is well situated to take advantage of tourism opportunities, particularly the Upper Waimakariri Basin, which is accessible by a state highway and railway. In addition, there is an international airport in nearby Christchurch.

At Cora Lynn, an eco-tourism operation is being developed to cater predominantly for international tourists to come and *"marvel at the snow tussock, ancient matagouri and mountain wetlands"* (*The Listener* July 5, 1994). At Grassmere, the lessee has recently developed a luxury tourist lodge, designed to cater for international visitors. The lodge is based around redevelopment of the old homestead. The resort is marketed overseas through an international tourist chain. The tourist operation is based upon the region's recreational assets including tramping, fishing, canoeing, photography and skiing. Following an arrangement between the runholders, a large tract of land at Craigieburn has been fenced off to provide an area where tourists from Grasmere can hunt deer.

At one station the runholders previously hosted tourists on a farm stay venture. The lessee commented that the tourist operation was a profitable, albeit irregular money-earner. However the family decided, to concentrate on farming, citing a loss of independence as a reason to halt the farm stays. *"We like our time to ourselves, and didn't like making more income through more people".*

In the 1980s the former leaseholders of Flock Hill Station, the Innes family, set up a tourist operation which included budget accommodation and farm tours. The Innes family regarded tourism as a lucrative side line to farming (Ansley 1994). In 1993 they sold the Flock Hill leasehold to Indonesian businessmen, who intend to redevelop the lodge and establish an international resort (ibid). Although the Innes family have moved to Mt Algidus, they still maintain a managerial stake in the farm operation at Flock Hill.

In the 1980s the Meares, who farm at Ryton station, became interested in a multi-million dollar proposal to develop a skifield, accommodation resort and camping ground on their property. Although up to $1 million was invested in planning and feasibility studies, the proposal is yet to get underway. The former developer for the plan, Bill Farmer, cited a lack of investors as a reason behind the proposal's delay (*The Press* August 9, 1993).

Of the remaining runholders, many were simply not interested in tourism, preferring the pastoral farming lifestyle. Given the opportunities tenure reform provides however, it is possible that more farm diversification into tourism will occur. In some cases this may be facilitated by foreign investment, as at Flock Hill. In the Upper Rakaia Basin, several runholders mentioned that they felt they were too isolated from the tourist market, particularly compared to the Waimakariri Basin. One runholder stated that even if he was interested in tourism, the property was *"off the beaten track"*. Similarly, another lessee felt that their property was too far away from the tourist market. Conversely, one farmer in the area has considered tourism and believes it is likely to be developed on the station in some form in the future.

At Castle Hill, an ambitious proposal by former leaseholder John Reid, to build a tourist village complete with hotels, restaurants, shops and a golf course, has not developed to the extent Mr Reid envisaged during the 1980s. Nevertheless, there are now more than 30 holiday homes which are owned predominantly by Christchurch recreationists (*The Press* 9th of August 1993).

There are a number of small independent tourist operators which run day tours into the Upper Waimakariri and Rakaia high country, principally for recreation and sightseeing. Bill Pearson, of "Back Country Adventures", for example, operates a mini van service up to Arthur's Pass for day trips, and often stops off at Castle Hill to see the limestone formations, and to inform tourists of the region's history and heritage. In Lake Coleridge village a lodge has been set up as *"the Sportsperson's Paradise"*, which caters for fishing, skiing, horse trekking and sightseeing, for both international and domestic tourists.

5.9) Land Management

Unlike some high country regions such as the McKenzie Basin, the Upper Rakaia and Waimakariri Basins have not suffered to such an extent from pest and weed problems. This is primarily due to the region's climatic conditions, particularly the relatively high rainfall. The incidence of pests and weeds varied from property to property. Nevertheless all the runholders had some form of policy to deal with pest and weed management. One runholder was concerned that rabbits and hieracium were increasing and posing the greatest threat to land management in the region. Alternatively, another farmer claimed that recreational shooters took care of any rabbits on his property, and that the spread of gorse and wilding trees were the most serious threats to farm production. One lessee felt that the carrying capacity of their farm had declined in recent years due to the spread of hieracium and rabbits. Another runholder considered his property to be relatively pest and weed-free.

Just as the pest and weed problems differed from property to property, so too did the farmers' attitudes towards management of them. One family considered burning an inappropriate tool for the management of weeds. Conversely another farmer claimed that fires were an effective and *"quite fun"* way of enhancing fresh palatable growth for stock. One runholder asserted that farming would simply become uneconomic if burning was completely banned, because the resulting spread of wilding trees, scrub and weeds, would restrict the amount of land available for grazing so that it would be of *"no economic use for the nation"*.

One lessee claimed to be conscious of keeping stock levels below the land's carrying capacity. The lessee claimed that because of careful land management his property was still in *"good heart"*. He claimed that a neighbouring property was suffering from land degradation and the spread of hieracium because it had been overgrazed and regularly burned.

Many of the runholders were frustrated by the findings of the South Island High Country Review (Working Party 1994) and other scientific reports, which suggested high country pastoral farming was unsustainable. One runholder for example, thought the Martin Report was *"absolute rubbish"* and its generalisations were inappropriate to apply to the wetter climate of the Waimakariri Basin. Similarly another runholder felt the Martin Report's claims were *"incorrect in relation to our damper type of country"*. One lessee suggested that scientific evidence often oversimplifies the environmental problems in the high country, and draws assumptions from research based in the semi arid regions which are then applied (inappropriately) at a wider scale. Another farmer felt that the Martin Report was put together by people who had no idea of the realities and practicalities of high country farming. Alternatively, one lessee thought that in many cases the Martin Report was accurate, and that some high country farms were unsustainable because farmers could not afford to maintain farm improvements. They hoped however, that the tenure reform process would encourage more sustainable land use.

5.10) Summary

The field area illustrates a range of attributes that typify high country communities. Upon closer inspection however, the Upper Waimakariri and Rakaia Basins hold a number of significant differences when compared to each other, and to other high country landscapes. The Upper Waimakariri and Rakaia high country communities provide a suitable setting for an examination of some key conflicts contested within the high country. The field area was chosen as a region suitable for research because it illustrated a range of issues at the local scale, indicative of high country conflicts at the wider scale. Furthermore, it became apparent that the respondents living in the field area held a good understanding of the reform process and the issues facing farmers throughout much of the South Island high country.

The Upper Waimakariri and Rakaia regions are valued by a range of interest groups which, as with the rest of the high country, have clashed upon a range of issues. This chapter has established the setting for the research material. Three sets of key issues which involve conflicts of interests in the high country are examined in the following three chapters.

In particular, issues arising from Ngai Tahu values for high country landscapes, foreign investment, and the conflicts between production and preservation interests are investigated. The research area is a suitable context to study these conflicts because these issues have manifested themselves within the region.

Chapter Six

Ngai Tahu Interests in High Country Landscapes

6.1) Introduction

High country environments have become the setting for a series of conflicts between a group of Maori people (Ngai Tahu), and those interests which refute Maori claims to high country landscapes. Ngai Tahu attempts for redress of grievances under the Treaty of Waitangi have attracted considerable attention and much suspicion by a variety of interest groups. Ngai Tahu values toward the landscape are seen as a challenge to the symbolic and material values ascribed to the high country by many Pakeha.

As the original owners, or *kaitiaki* (guardians) of the high country, Ngai Tahu claim an interest in the region's management. Ngai Tahu hold a range of symbolic and material values which are interrelated and derived from the land. For southern Maori, the high country is regarded as *kaianga mahi mo ratou mahinga kai*; sites associated with the gathering of resources such as raw materials, food and medicine (Tau 1988). As established in Chapters Two and Three respectively, the high country represent landscapes of spiritual and material significance to Ngai Tahu, from which they derive their identity. *"A number of Southern Island national parks include mountains, lakes and land of particular spiritual value to Ngai Tahu. They are the repository of much Ngai Tahu mythology and tradition"* (Waitangi Tribunal 1991: 1054-1055). Ngai Tahu assert that although they maintain their historical and spiritual links with high country environments, they have been wrongly denied access and a role in the region's management.

6.2) Local Responses to Ngai Tahu Interests

Material from the research area provides valuable insights into the nature of the conflicts between Ngai Tahu, and those interest groups which oppose Maori regaining a role in the management of high country landscapes. Within the Rakaia and Waimakariri high country, there exist a range of Ngai Tahu values. Although Ngai Tahu have yet to specify where there particular interests lie, the Upper Rakaia and Waimakariri high country has traditionally been an area of importance to Ngai Tahu and pre-Ngai Tahu tribes. The region contains a number of traditional *pounamu* trails, as well as sites used for resource gathering, including Lake Coleridge and parts of the Craigieburn forest.

Federated Farmers have publicly stated that they welcome the settlement of Ngai Tahu grievances over land rights in the South Island (Federated Farmers 1992: 18). Ngai Tahu and Federated Farmers have claimed to have found agreement regarding issues of concern at the regional level, particularly as both groups envisage benefits from the tenure reform process. In contrast at the local level, it is evident that there is a degree of indifference to Ngai Tahu interests. This suggests there is a significant difference between high country conflicts at different spatial scales. This is significant if resolution of conflicts are to be achieved, particularly as both Ngai Tahu and farmers seek compromise through locally based reforms.

Within the field area, several runholders seemed to have a perception that Maori involvement in high country lands would mean Maori control and occupation, at the expense of other interest groups. One lessee was concerned that Maori ownership over parts of the high country would bring about an increase in rentals for runholders, and would lead to the public being restricted access to high country lands. The lessee felt that much of the high country would lose its productive value under Ngai Tahu ownership, because *"they would let the land deteriorate into scrub and gorse"*. This sentiment suggests that part of the conflict stems from a mistrust or misunderstanding of Maori values for high country landscapes. Even if Ngai Tahu were to have gained ownership of pastoral leases, they made it clear that it would not affect the way farmers manage the land, and that public access laws would not be changed.

Another runholder was aware of an historical presence of Maori in the Upper Waimakariri Basin. He was happy to point out ancient Maori rock drawings on his property, and noted that there was an old Maori flax basket discovered nearby. The farmer commented he had been approached by representatives from Ngai Tahu, as well as Waitaha (pre-Ngai Tahu *iwi*), who had visited the property to examine ancient rock drawings.

Despite an ancient *pounamu* trail crossing through his property, one lessee was unaware and unconcerned of any Maori interests in the local region. Whereas another runholding family *"did not see a problem"* with Ngai Tahu interests in the high country, their neighbours regarded Ngai Tahu claims with circumspection: *"they only want the high country for what they can get out of it"*.

One lessee felt that Maori were privileged to have the Treaty of Waitangi, and receive the rights they did; *"they were lucky they weren't eaten like they did to the Moriori!"*. Whereas one runholder felt Ngai Tahu knew nothing about the high country, another farming family was astounded by how much Ngai Tahu knew about their property and the region. They had approached the tangata whenua to gain their consent for a tourist development in the region. They felt that Ngai Tahu were well aware of the different values for the region, and were surprised to learn of the depth of Maori feeling for the high country.

6.3) Maori Environmental Perspectives

In contrast to the dominant Western capitalist view, many Maori hold a fundamentally different relationship with the environment (Orbell 1985, Yoon 1986). Maori groups developed a relationship with the environment which was based not only from their views on the creation of the world (in which all natural objects are seen as kin), but was also derived from an interdependence with nature. The environment impinged upon every social activity, from the provision of food and shelter, to interaction and fighting (James 1993).

Maori were responsible for adverse environmental effects, including the clearing of extensive areas of forest through fire and the hunting and extinction of certain bird species. Over a period of time however, many Maori developed a sense of kaitiakitanga (environmental stewardship), which regulated the use of natural resources. Environmental exploitation was mediated by the development of a set of social institutions that *"rewarded sharing and reciprocity and punished profligacy that had no apparent social meaning"* (O'Riordan 1989: 78).

In a contemporary context, Ngai Tahu seek the opportunity to practise their values within the landscape, as guaranteed to them by the Treaty of Waitangi but which have nevertheless, largely been silenced by colonial rule. In the 1980s, the Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board organised a claim before the Waitangi Tribunal which was based upon breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi, and also on the failure of the Crown to meet its contractual obligations under major land purchase agreements. Ngai Tahu sought to regain a significant role in the management of the resources within their role (tribal region). As part of their claim, Ngai Tahu endeavoured to recover a role in high country management. The compensation they sought included regaining ownership of the high country Crown pastoral leases, farmed by families of Pakeha descent.

6.4) Ngai Tahu Claim to the High Country

With regard to the high country, the Ngai Tahu claim had two significant implications. Ngai Tahu claimed that the land between the eastern foothills and the main divide (an area that includes nearly all the high country pastoral leases) was never legally bought by the Crown in Kemp's Purchase Deed in 1848. Ngai Tahu argued before the Waitangi Tribunal that the Crown had leased out land to high country farmers which it never owned. The Tribunal however, rejected this claim on the grounds of inconclusive evidence (Waitangi Tribunal 1991).

In spite of the ruling, the high country was identified as a region which could comprise a diversity of remedies for past injustices, which were upheld by the Tribunal (O'Regan 1989). Such a gesture however, was opposed by pastoral lessees, and recreational and conservation groups. They argued before the Waitangi Tribunal that it was inappropriate for land with high multiple use values (production and conservation) to be managed by any sector other than the Crown, which they considered was obligated to protect their ("public") interests (Waitangi Tribunal 1991).

For Ngai Tahu, ownership of the high country pastoral leases was seen as an opportunity to regain a position in management of the region's resources. Chairman of the Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board, Tipene O'Regan (1989: 258) stated that *"the major argument for Ngai Tahu recovery of the high country pastoral lease lands is the position it would give the tribe in the decision-making about the future of the region. They* (Ngai Tahu) *could no longer be disregarded in the processes of government and the management of the environment".* Ngai Tahu regard the destruction of their mahinga kai largely as the result of the land use pattern imposed by Pakeha rule which denied the tribe any authority. *"A presence as owner, even in a titular sense, would give them 'a place at the table' in the future: and, as well, there is mana, the cultural and historical association with that vast southern landscape which is the tribe's spiritual home"* (ibid: 259).

Ngai Tahu objectives are pragmatically based. As a tribe, Ngai Tahu are understandably reluctant to take on ownership of the high country pastoral leases when it is likely to be financially disadvantageous. Ngai Tahu are fully aware that the costs of administering high country pastoral land exceed the income from rentals. *"From a financial viewpoint, if Ngai Tahu win the award of these lands they will acquire liability, not an asset (ibid: 258).* Moreover, a group of lawyers contracted by the Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board, found that the legal agreement between the Crown and lessees was binding, and that even if ownership of the pastoral leases was viable, it would be difficult to obtain legal rights for the leases.

Hamish Ensor (Waitangi Tribunal 1991: 1041), former chairperson of the South Island High Country Committee, suggests that if any group of New Zealanders could claim to be the tangata whenua of the high country, then it is the lessees themselves. Mr Ensor argued that farmers were the only people in the history of New Zealand to have actually settled on and worked in areas of the high country, in many cases for generations. The Waitangi Tribunal (1991) noted however, that when the purchase of Ngai Tahu lands was effected by the Crown, requests by Ngai Tahu to retain extensive areas of land (which included parts of the high country) were unjustly denied by the Crown. Consequently, Ngai Tahu were left with no high country land, and few other resources. *"They were in no position to engage in pastoral farming whether in the high country or elsewhere. But European settlers, in contrast, were enabled to take up extensive runs of many thousands of acres"* (ibid: 1042).

Although there is a common perception by many interest groups that Ngai Tahu are still interested in gaining ownership of the Crown pastoral leases, Tony Sewells (property manager for Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board) states that Ngai Tahu's claim to the high country is now in the past. Mr Sewells suggested that unlike the Crown, *"Ngai Tahu are not in the practise of breaking binding legal agreements"* (pers. comm. 1995). Furthermore, Ngai Tahu have found more effective means for the generation of income and the restoration of mana, including the purchase of urban land, and the ownership of commercial fishing quota. This does not mean however, that Ngai Tahu are not interested in maintaining an interest in the management of the high country. The identity of Ngai Tahu, and thereby their well-being, is inextricably linked through history and their spiritual beliefs with the high country. Tipene O'Regan (1988: 5) suggests that *"to Maori, the heritage, 'kete', carried by our tupuna* (ancestors)... *is probably more important than aesthetic, scientific and conservation values".*

6.5) Tenure Reform: Opportunity for Resolution?

The following section is based upon a discussion with Mr Trevor Howse, who works for the Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board.

Amidst the process of high country tenure review, Ngai Tahu are seeking to protect and respect some of their sacred sites, which are of utmost spiritual importance to the tribe. In the tenure review process, Trevor Howse is the official representative for Ngai Tahu interests. Although Mr Howse contends Ngai Tahu largely *"keep in the background during negotiations, they sit in the reform process as an owner"* (Note Appendix 1). Ngai Tahu have been involved in the framing of the high country tenure review process since its outset in 1993. Mr Howse's task is to have areas of historical significance to Ngai Tahu, such as waahi tapu (sacred sights), urupa (burial sites), historical settlements, and access to mahinga kai recognised, and if possible protected. When a pastoral lease is due for review, Mr Howse approaches the runholder and examines Ngai Tahu's interest in the property.

Based on an extensive knowledge of different southern Maori historical periods, sometimes involving different hapu and different social practices, Mr Howse *"looks for the footprint in the land"*. This involves searching for evidence of Maori inhabitation of an area, through for example noting clumps of *harakeke* (flax) and *ti-kouka* (cabbage trees), which in some cases are likely to have been cultivated to support settlement or provide sustenance along a pathway. Additionally, Maori place names and oral history, which have been treasured through the generations, provide clues as to whether the region is of significance to Ngai Tahu. One runholder commented that Mr Howse had created a whole new history on his property, which he otherwise would never have appreciated.

Contrary to popular opinion, Mr Howse asserts Ngai Tahu are not seeking to lock up areas of the high country for exclusive Maori control. He asserts that Ngai Tahu are willing to share the rights to utilise the landscapes of the high country. In the high country, Ngai Tahu will *"choose the spots to make statements... and the pastoral review process gives Ngai Tahu the opportunity to do our thing quietly"*.

It is Mr Howse's task to set up a dialogue between Ngai Tahu and farmers. Mr Howse suggests Ngai Tahu are involved with, or have interests in, about 50 high country properties, although as yet they are not prepared to make them publicly known. In most cases, Mr Howse contends the present leasehold conditions will not be affected by Ngai Tahu involvement.

In many cases, Ngai Tahu are content to leave it up to the farmers to protect sites of spiritual significance. In most cases, Mr Howse feels that once farmers understand what Ngai Tahu's interests in the land are, then it is in the farmers interests to protect them. Ngai Tahu are content to come to an agreement with the farmers whereby these sites are conserved, through for example a fence around a fragile ecological site, or an agreement not to undertake development on a site of spiritual significance. If necessary, the Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board may undertake legal steps to ensure that a protective designation occurs. Ngai Tahu are interested in leaving many of their historical sites untouched and secluded from scrutiny, as it would protect them from public curiosity. Mr Howse asserts that *"Pakeha seem to have a morbid interest in digging up my ancestors!"*.

Although Ngai Tahu are faced with a certain degree of suspicion and opposition to their motives, Mr Howse is optimistic that Ngai Tahu are in a position to have their values, largely ignored and overridden for 150 years, recognised in the landscapes of the high country. Within the tenure reform process, Ngai Tahu have forged a meaningful role and Mr Howse feels that reform stands to have benefits for all the interest groups. *"The tenure review process creates reality, different interests are involved... and the high country is no longer prioritised as a grazing regime"*.

6.6) Recovery of High Country Land?

In 1992 the Government purchased the lessees' interests in the Greenstone, Elfin Bay and Routeburn Stations near Queenstown. 27, 000 hectares of pastoral lease land was placed in a "Maori Land Bank" for possible settlement of Ngai Tahu claims. Although Ngai Tahu will have to purchase the leasehold off the Crown, there is a common perception that Ngai Tahu will be gifted these high country properties (Public Access New Zealand (PANZ) 1994).

For Ngai Tahu, ownership of the leases in the Greenstone Valley is seen as a unique opportunity to further their symbolic and material interests in the high country. The Greenstone Valley region is valued by Maori as an ancient pounamu trail which contains significant heritage values for Ngai Tahu. Furthermore, Mr Howse suggests that as well as maintaining farming in the region, the area could be developed for an ecotourism venture.

6.7) "Public Interest" Group Opposition

Ngai Tahu claims to the high country, and the pursuit of conservation land to be used in part settlement of Treaty of Waitangi claims, has attracted widespread opposition especially by conservation and recreational groups. In particular, Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) and PANZ have led a campaign to oppose Ngai Tahu regaining ownership over parts of the high country, because they are concerned it would lead to an erosion of public access and the despoliation of conservation values (PANZ March 1994; FMC March 1995). With regard to the pastoral runs in the Routeburn- Greenstone region, PANZ has organised a petition and national campaign demanding that Ngai Tahu get their *"Hands Off Greenstone Valley"* (PANZ March 1994). PANZ fear that *"private ownership or control has the potential to restrict access to only those willing and able to pay entry or user charges"* (ibid). Furthermore, PANZ suggests that Ngai Tahu control of high country regions such as the Greenstone Valley is somehow likely to have an adverse impact on conservation values.

PANZ has linked Ngai Tahu with a Queenstown entrepreneur who suggested developing a mono-rail through the Greenstone Valley. PANZ has used the guise of the mono-rail (which is seen as a threat to the public recreational and conservation values for the region) to engender opposition to Ngai Tahu. Despite Ngai Tahu's attempt to distance themselves from the monorail proposal, the media and recreational groups continue to suggest Ngai Tahu are in the process of constructing a mono-rail link through the region (PANZ 1995).

The fears of the recreational groups' are based upon the premise that every New Zealander has rights of public access to high country land (PANZ 1994). Conservationist David Round (*The Press* September 1, 1995), states that *"we must maintain ownership and guardianship by the Crown for all, Maori and European alike, who now enjoy free access and a say in management"*. In reality however, high country runholders enjoy the same rights of trespass on leasehold land as they do on freehold land. Legally, public access is a privilege granted by leaseholders and not a free public right as recreational groups often allege. Furthermore, access laws are not altered upon a change of ownership. Nevertheless, there is a common perception that Ngai Tahu ownership is associated with private control and therefore the exclusion of the "public". A recent editorial in *The Press* (April 8, 1995) suggested that there is a *"deeper agenda"* behind recreational groups' argument. Tipene O'Regan (in Cave 1995: 111) suggests that *"the moment we* (Ngai Tahu) *indicate an interest in a particular block of land, there is a tirade of racially motivated objections from so-called greenies and recreationists"*.

PANZ imply that if Maori farm the high country they will restrict public access to recreational areas in some manner different to non-Maori farmers. Similarly, in the FMC submissions to the Waitangi Tribunal (1991: 1044), vice-president David Henson suggested that Ngai Tahu ownership of the high country would give Maori (unlike other groups) the right to *"economic exploitation"*. Opposition by recreational groups to Ngai Tahu ownership of high country leases has been criticised by President of the South Island High Country Committee, Bob Brown. Mr Brown has accused PANZ of exploiting fears of Maori ownership and seeking to inflame racial prejudices.

Mr Brown pointed out that *"although PANZ pretends otherwise...owners of pastoral leases enjoy the same rights of trespass whether they are Maori or non-Maori"* (*The Press* March 22, 1995).

Recreationists assert that Maori are presently not excluded from using conservation land. Dr Hugh Barr (*The Press* May 8, 1995), President of FMC states *"it's not as if Maoris are prohibited from using conservation land. They can enjoy that land in the same way all New Zealanders can"*. Nevertheless, Pakeha rule has not provided Maori with the opportunity to have their values (spiritual and economic) recognised in the high country. Ngai Tahu are determined to forge a meaningful relationship in which they can play a role in the management of tribal lands (including the high country), as guaranteed to them by the Treaty of Waitangi and the purchase deeds of Ngai Tahu land.

6.8) Summary

Ngai Tahu values for the high country represent a contested reading of the landscape. In a postmodern era, Ngai Tahu *"resist inclusion in a state genericised discourse of otherness"* (Dominy 1993: 570). Ngai Tahu readings of high country landscapes rebut the modernist contention by some interest groups, that there is one high country in which all New Zealanders can share. From the high country, Ngai Tahu derive a set of symbolic and material values which contest the meanings commonly ascribed to the landscape by many Pakeha.

As tangata whenua, Maori see themselves as kaitiaki (guardians), in which they are responsible to maintain stewardship over parts of the land. Ngai Tahu are not solely interested in gaining access to power and resources for private gain. The Ngai Tahu claim is an attempt to regain rangitiratanga (self-determination), in order to determine their own destiny, and maintain a role (alongside the Crown) in the management of the nation's resources.

Amidst the process of high country reform, Ngai Tahu have seized the opportunity to have their values acknowledged and protected. Despite a perception to the contrary, the recognition of Ngai Tahu values in the high country need not be seen to endanger the material and symbolic values ascribed to high country landscapes by many other interest groups.

Chapter Seven

Foreign Investment in High Country Landscapes

7.1) Introduction

"Many Kiwis... do not like the idea of money moguls from abroad supping our half gallon, driving their stake into our quarter acre and pursing their lips at our Pavlova paradise" (*Sunday News* April 23, 1995).

Amidst a context of internationalisation, there has been much concern regarding the implications that foreign investment is seen to hold for New Zealand society. Foreign ownership of New Zealand land has been scorned as leading to a loss of economic self-determination, and an erosion of heritage values and national identity. Public interest groups such as the Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa (CAFCA), have formed to oppose foreign ownership of New Zealand land. Political parties, including Alliance and New Zealand First, have formulated policies which specifically target voters opposed to overseas ownership of resources in New Zealand.

Combined with the tenure reform process, in which there are increased opportunities to sell both the leasehold and freehold titles to land, the easing of foreign investment regulations has caused considerable public concern that many high country runholders will sell their properties to wealthy foreign investors. As high country landscapes embody a range of symbolic values from which New Zealanders derive a sense of nationhood, overseas investment in the high country is seen to represent a fundamental challenge to the nation's identity. As New Zealand becomes inextricably linked to global economic forces, and as the Government takes steps to reform the restrictions on overseas investment, the issue of foreign ownership of New Zealand resources has aroused considerable social and political debate.

7.2) Local Responses to Foreign Investment

Within the high country, and within the Upper Rakaia and Waimakariri Basin, there is a diversity of opinion regarding foreign ownership of high country lands. Following the well-publicised purchase of the Flock Hill leasehold by Indonesian investors, the issue of foreign investment has been one of particular concern to many interests in the region.

In 1993 two Indonesian businessmen purchased the 14, 000 hectare (ha) Flock Hill leasehold from the Innes family for $3 million. The Indonesians are interested in redeveloping the tourist facilities at Flock Hill into an international tourist resort. The property is one of the high country stations owned by the University of Canterbury, and the Indonesians were (and reportedly still are) interested in buying the freehold, although as yet the University has declined to sell (Martin pers. comm. 1995).

The sale of Flock Hill came under public scrutiny following an article in *The Listener* by Bruce Ansley (1994). Several commentators expressed their dismay at the apparent secrecy of the sale, which was requested by the Innes family and the Indonesians, and maintained by the Overseas Investment Commission (OIC) because of the "commercial sensitivity" of the deal (ibid: 20). Mrs Innes states that *"it was a sensitive issue. We have had nearly 10 years of the public trying to dictate how we farm and manage a lease. We are private people. We are up in arms that a private deal has been so publicly aired. We have no qualms about selling to an overseas buyer, the country needs it. Our rules are so strong that the new buyers simply can't do anything but abide by New Zealand standards"* (ibid). Although the tourism operation at Flock Hill is now managed by another (New Zealand) family, the farm has been leased back to the Innes family, who have appointed a farm manager.

One lessee argues that the national economy needs foreign investment, and points out that the best "New Zealand companies" are foreign owned. *"Foreigners can't take the soil away, they're subject to the same laws as New Zealand farmers".*

The capital generated by foreign investment is exemplified by the sale of Flock Hill leasehold. Whereas the property had a government valuation of $1.5 million, the Indonesians paid the former lessees $3 million. One farmer suggested that no one in New Zealand would have bought it for that much.

Another lessee agreed that the nation needs foreign investment. The lessee felt that foreign ownership would make little difference to management of the land. He was enthusiastic about the financial opportunities offered by foreign investors, particularly for tourist development. The lessee suggested that foreigners might be more flexible about allowing recreational access on their properties, compared to some traditional high country families who had forged a sense of ownership with the land.

Another runholding family recognised the benefits of foreign investment for the economy, but were opposed to foreign ownership of rural land. The male runholder described foreign investment as a *"double edged sword"*; the money would be beneficial if they were to sell or seek capital for expansions, but he believed it would allow the opportunity for foreigners to dictate development in New Zealand.

One lessee felt that the high country is an inappropriate forum for debating issues of overseas ownership: *"if New Zealand is concerned about foreign ownership we should address it New Zealand wide"*. The lessee stated he could understand why New Zealand farmers would be interested in the financial benefits offered through foreign investment.

One runholder stated he was *"dead against"* foreign ownership in the high country. The runholder felt that it was unfair, particularly as he felt it would lead to an increase in land values which outpriced land for New Zealanders. Similarly, another runholder was concerned that foreign investment would cause an increase in land values which made property unaffordable for young farmers. *"We don't need Indonesians and the likes owning high country places"*. He felt that *"98% of high country people"* were opposed to foreign ownership in the high country. He was opposed to the *"principle of foreigners being able to own up to all of the high country"* (ibid).

Another lessee held mixed views on foreign ownership of the high country. Whereas he disapproved of foreigners owning New Zealand land, he appreciated the financial benefits foreign investment offered. Similarly, another farming family opposed foreign ownership of the high country, *"but when we sell, we will sell to anyone".*

7.3) Regulatory Reform

Overseas investment in New Zealand has formerly been regulated by the Overseas Investment Act 1973 and the Land Settlement Promotion and Land Acquisition Act (LSP) 1952. The LSP Act's criteria for overseas buyers includes the prevention of speculation and absentee ownership, with the aim that land of "high public value" is retained in New Zealand ownership (Ansley 1995: 20). The Overseas Investment Regulations set different criteria, with the objective to ensure that foreign investment aids market competition, develops new export markets, creates job opportunities, and enhances domestic productivity (ibid).

In 1994, the Government introduced legislation to streamline the process for foreign investment in New Zealand. This was based on a belief that easing the way for overseas investment in the country would provide national economic benefits. The Government considered the present legislative framework a hindrance to valuable investment in New Zealand. Finance Minister Bill Birch, comments that *"foreigners wishing to invest in New Zealand have until now had to battle through a confusing and conflicting array of legal obstacles. The current regime imposes unnecessary obstacles to small land purchases, inflates legal fees, and creates confusion over the purchase of our regulation of overseas investment"* (*The Press* December 1, 1994).

In spite of public and political opposition, the Overseas Investment Amendment Act was passed in August 1995. The new Act strengthens the responsibilities of the OIC for the regulation of foreign investment in New Zealand. The OIC has been heavily criticised in the past as a secretive organisation which has failed to effectively scrutinise foreign land buyers (CAFCA 1994; Ansley 1994). CAFCA points out that the OIC only declined 4 applications, out of 7, 100, between 1987- 1994 (in *New Zealand Farmer* June 22, 1995).

Under the new Act the OIC is required to report regularly to Parliament, and will not be empowered to keep "sensitive" commercial information secret. In addition the OIC has the authority to take legal action against investors who bought land for a specified purpose, and then used it for another purpose. The Government maintains the OIC will be required to take account of, and will improve, the protection of areas with high public interest values (*The Press* August 2, 1995).

7.4) The Debate

There is considerable debate regarding the implications of overseas investment in New Zealand. The Government and many business interests favour foreign investment as a means of generating capital through the national economy. Amidst the forces of internationalisation, foreign investment is seen as being of fundamental importance to the national economy. Mr Birch (in *The Press* April 10, 1995) states that *"without foreign investment we would not have achieved the high overall rapid growth in jobs for New Zealanders we are now experiencing".* Mr Birch suggests that critics are misleading the public about foreign investment. He claimed that profit for foreign corporations operating in New Zealand in 1994 was $3.8 billion, of which approximately two-thirds were retained and reinvested in New Zealand (*The Press* August 2, 1995).

Executive Director of Brierley Investments, Andrew Meehan, argues that foreign investment has helped reduce unemployment. Mr Meehan asserts that *"those nations which accept globalisation, through the removal of economic barriers, would benefit from the transfer of technology, diversity of choice, capital for adding value, and ultimately to an increased level of national income"* (*Straight Furrow* June 29, 1995). On a recent visit to New Zealand Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, warned that New Zealand runs the risk of becoming a "Third World" nation if it does not encourage foreign investment (*Sunday News* April 23, 1995).

Although CAFCA acknowledges some foreign investment is beneficial for the New Zealand economy, they argue regulations should be more strict, particularly regarding the sale of land to overseas investors.

Bill Rosenberg, a researcher for CAFCA, claims that foreign investment leads to the loss of New Zealand capital overseas, and that the financial benefits are not enjoyed by *"ordinary New Zealanders"* (*The Press* May 6, 1995). Opponents of foreign investment are concerned that legislative reform will allow overseas investors to buy up what they consider relatively cheap land, thus fuelling the price of land values beyond the reach of many New Zealanders.

7.5) Symbolic Attachment to Land

Although many New Zealanders have come to a *"fragile acceptance of foreign investment in New Zealand... this does not extend to land"* (Ansley 1995: 20). An increase in rural land purchases by overseas investors, from $138 million in 1993 (49, 000ha of land), to $353 million in 1994 (72, 000ha of land), has fuelled opposition to foreign investment (*New Zealand Farmer* June 22, 1995).

Land sales to foreign investors have invariably created the most controversy regarding foreign investment and attracted considerable attention. Many New Zealanders have developed a powerful symbolic attachment to land, from which a regional and national identity has been forged. The purchase of New Zealand land by foreigners is considered by many people a threat to the nation's identity and heritage. Sandra Lee, deputy leader of Alliance states that *"foreign ownership of our land is more than an economic issue. It is an issue of nationhood. The loss of New Zealand land amounts to the loss of our nation itself"* (*Sunday News* April 23, 1995). Murray Horton, secretary for CAFCA (1994: 2), argues that land sales to foreign investors *"seem to have the greatest impact in the heartland, and quite literally in the backbone of the country".*

Hurunui District Mayor, John Chaffey, has spoken out against foreign ownership following a number of rural land purchases in his district; *"It's part of the culture in New Zealand that everyone should have the opportunity of owning land. The land is part of my psyche"* (in Ansley 1995: 20). Mr Chaffey believes that legislative reform to restrictions on foreign investment will open the way for *"predators and speculators, and would deny New Zealanders their right to own land"* (*The Press* February 15, 1995).

"If we are not to legislate ourselves into becoming a dispossessed people, like some unfortunate landless nations of the world, we must ensure that the essential element that is desired by all peoples to underpin their nationhood is not sold by land whores to the highest bidder" (in Ansley 1995: 20).

Federated Farmers have adopted the view that they accept non-New Zealanders owning land, providing they become residents of New Zealand, and they come and *"get their hands dirty"* (*The Press* February 23, 1995). Graeme Robertson, President of Federated Farmers states that farmers are aggrieved by wealthy foreigners purchasing rural land as a way of dumping surplus capital; *"This kind of purchase involves no commitment to the land or to putting anything into the farming community. Farmers see this as ripping off their heritage and the things they care most about: the land and its capacity to produce"* (ibid).

Nevertheless, there are numerous rural properties in New Zealand which are owned by absentee domestic owners including farms in corporate ownership. In 1988 for example, approximately 8% of farm land was owned by a private company, and 40% of farm land was held under partnership (Fairweather 1989: 30). Moreover, absentee foreign investors who own New Zealand farms still require property managers, which is carried out almost exclusively by New Zealanders. Furthermore, rural land purchases by foreigners constitute a very small percentage of total foreign investment in New Zealand. For example in 1993, the OIC approved $138 million worth of land sales, out of a total approval of $9.4 billion (CAFCA 1994: 4; Ansley 1995: 22).

7.6) Xenophobia

In Figure 7.1 Garrick Tremain (*The Press* May 22, 1995) alleges that opponents of foreign investment in New Zealand, such as Leader of New Zealand First Party, Winston Peters, are xenophobic. Much of the opposition to foreign investment in New Zealand is based from an emotive viewpoint. Although opponents of foreign investment justify their arguments carefully, many rely on support from sections of society who fear or dislike foreigners. Indeed, Winston Peters recognises the political implications of this aversion to foreign ownership of land in New Zealand.

Mr Peters claims that 51% of New Zealanders are opposed to the sale of land to foreigners and a further 26% are uneasy. *"This is a glittering prize for any party wanting power: 77% of all voters"* (*New Zealand Farmer* June 22, 1995).

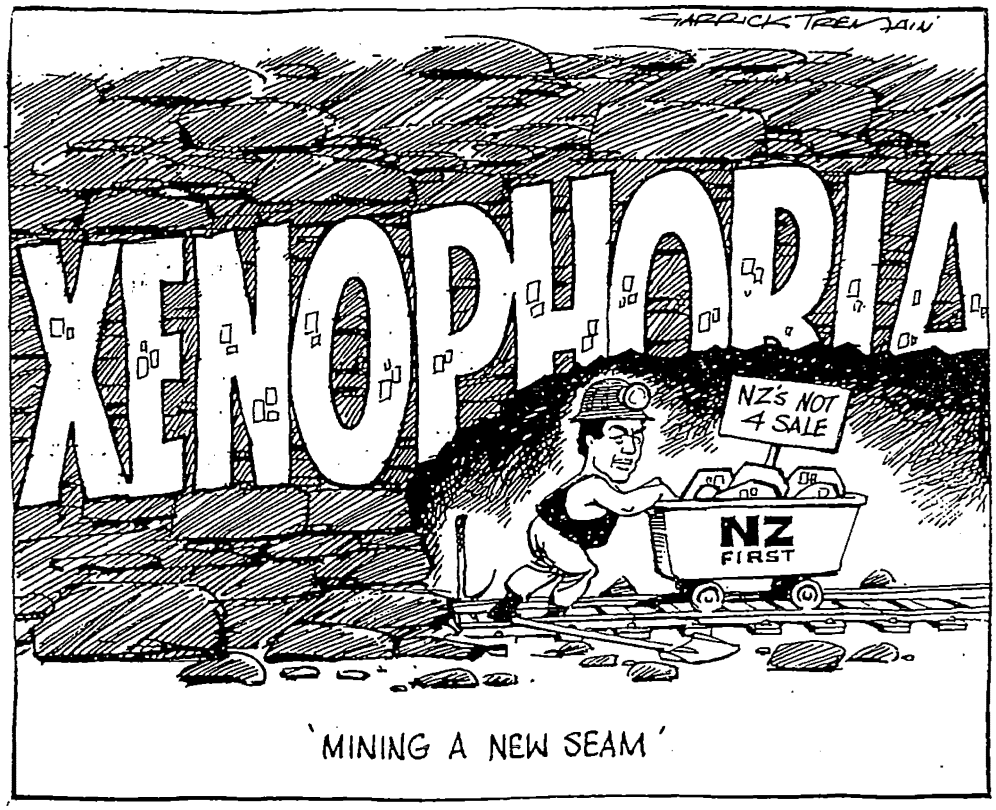


Figure 7.1: Xenophobic Opposition to Foreign Investment

(Source: *The Press* June 6, 1995)

Given that there are apparent economic benefits from foreign investment in the national economy, several commentators claim that they oppose overseas ownership of New Zealand resources on the grounds that they are patriotic, preferring to see New Zealanders own and manage the resources of "Godzone". Many opponents of overseas investment claim foreign companies are exploiting the nation's resources at the expense of New Zealand companies and the public. Such assertions however, overlook the implications of internationalisation, in which the world's economic and social links become increasingly tied. This is exemplified by for example the fact that "New Zealand companies" such as Brierleys, Carter Holt Harvey, and Fletcher Challenge Limited, have significant capital investments overseas, and they have major shareholdings by foreign investors.

Underlying much of the opposition to foreign investment in New Zealand lies a xenophobic attitude. Although Bill Birch has an economic agenda behind the reform of foreign investment regulations, he claims that political opposition is *"trying to whip up totally unjustified prejudice against foreign investment"* (in *The Press* December 1, 1994). Similarly, Mr Meehan of Brierleys argues that increasing opposition to foreign investment is *"little more than ill-disguised xenophobia"* (*Straight Furrow* June 29, 1995). Winston Peters rebuts that *"if standing up for your country to be owned by its own people is xenophobia, then I'm guilty* (*The Press* August 11, 1995).

Bruce Ansley (1994: 21) writes that *"no one wants to seem racist. They choose their words delicately"*. Although opponents of foreign investment do not admit to drawing support through xenophobia, opposition does however come from a mistrust of foreigners, particularly Asians. A recent survey of New Zealanders by the Foreign Direct Investment Advisory Group (in Ansley 1995: 22) found that whereas Australians, Britons and Americans respectively, were the *"preferred foreign investors"*, Asians were the least popular. *"There was an obvious streak of anti-Asian feeling coming through at low but clear levels throughout the survey"* (in Ansley 1995: 20).

In spite of a perceived Asian investment boom in New Zealand, analysis of foreign investment data illustrates that most land purchases are being made by investors from other nations. In 1994 for example, the largest investors were 43 United States citizens who bought 22, 448 ha costing $116.1 million. British investors spent $63 million for 2, 370 ha, and Australians $11 million for 16, 400 ha. Japanese investors paid $28 million for 3, 750 ha, and Malaysians $3 million for 10, 305 million ha (Ansley 1995: 22).

The perception that New Zealand land is being sold to Asians is no accident. Although CAFCA for example, is well aware of where the major foreign investors in New Zealand come from, they appear to have deliberately chosen to highlight sales to Asian investors, presumably because it will attract more support for their cause.

This is highlighted by their magazine *Foreign Control Watchdog*, which details an account of foreign investment in New Zealand, not by investors from the United States or Britain, but investors from Indonesia; who are described as *"Kleptos"* and the *"butchers of Timor"* (CAFCA 1994: 2-4). *"The people of New Zealand are entitled to know who is buying our country. Even more so when it is Indonesians who are doing the buying"* (ibid: 3). But why "even more so"?

Similarly, other media sources fuel xenophobic concerns by highlighting foreign investment by Asians. This is reflected in two recent *Listener* articles (Ansley 1994;1995) which expose the sale of a high country lease to Indonesians, and a number of land purchases by Singaporean investors. While land purchases to Asians seem to have attracted widespread attention, the freeholding of farms such as Coleridge Downs in the Rakaia valley to United States investors, has largely escaped notice.

Although Tremain's cartoons (Figure 7.2 and 7.3) expose the xenophobic attitudes of opponents of foreign investment, they exploit the perception of an "Asian invasion" in New Zealand.

Figure 7.2: Sale of New Zealand Land to Foreigners

(Source: *The Press* December 13, 1994)

Figure 7.3: Pakeha Dispossession

(Source: *The Press* May 30, 1995)

In Figure 7.3, Tremain illustrates the irony of the Pakeha characters opposition to ownership of New Zealand land by foreigners, with the historical dispossession of Maori land by Pakeha.

7.7) Foreign Ownership in the High Country

"New Zealanders revere their high country... Our souls are nestled in swannies. So there's a deal of misgiving about how easily the high country could fall into foreign hands" (Ansley 1994: 21).

The threat that foreign investment is seen to hold for the nation's identity and heritage, is exemplified within the high country. As a symbolic source of nationhood, opponents of overseas investment are concerned that ownership of foreign investors in high country land will prevent New Zealanders from enjoying the benefits of using and valuing high country landscapes.

Debate over foreign investment in New Zealand has distinguished the high country as a landscape of national symbolic importance. In the high country, rather than arguing that selling land to foreign interests will have adverse economic effects for New Zealanders, opponents of overseas investment have focused upon the perceived loss of heritage values that foreign ownership may cause.

Following an article in *The Listener* (Ansley 1994) which highlighted the sale of high country leasehold land to foreign investors, Aucklander Ben Smith was inspired to lobby against overseas ownership of high country pastoral land. Mr Smith campaigned in the Selwyn by-election on the issue, and formed the Earth Guardians to lobby for tighter government controls on foreign ownership of rural land. Earth Guardians is co-ordinated through the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (RFBPS). Earth Guardian's (1994: 1) objective is to *"Save our High Country Heritage"* and to *"Prevent Foreigners buying our Birthright"*. Earth Guardian's suggests that the tenure review process will allow foreigners to freehold relatively cheap high country land which will compromise the opportunity to conserve valued areas of the high country, and lead to to the restriction of public access to popular recreational areas (ibid).

Earth Guardians has the support of other recreational and conservation groups such as Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) and Public Access New Zealand (PANZ), who are concerned that foreign investment in the high country will lead to a significant increase in tourist and commercial developments, that will shut out the New Zealand public from gaining access to many high country regions. Underlying the argument against foreign investment in the high country, is the notion that New Zealand's back country heritage (the "right" to gain access to the South Island rangelands, and the sense of identity derived from the high country's natural and historical legacy) is under threat. Patron of FMC, Allan Evans states *"I'm concerned about anyone from overseas buying the high country. We can't buy land in Japan... I don't object to overseas money, I object to them getting title to mountain peaks"* (Ansley 1994: 21).

Minister of Lands and Minister of Conservation, Denis Marshall, states that recreational groups such as PANZ and FMC *"appear never to be frightened of playing the race card and conjuring up visions of foreign, usually Asian, people becoming the new squattocracy"* (*The Dominion* June 13, 1995).

The sale of several high country leasehold properties to foreign investors has recently been heightened by media coverage. Flock Hill and Lilybank are now owned by Indonesians, Australian investors own Erewhon, and Japanese investors are thought to be interested in Mt Potts (Earth Guardians 1994). Trevor Howse (pers. comm. 1995) suggested that there might even be more foreign investors involved in the high country than many groups realise.

The sale of Lilybank Station to Hutomo Suharto, son of Indonesian President Suharto (considered by some groups to be a corrupt dictator) (CAFCA 1994), has raised considerable attention to foreign overseas of land in New Zealand. CAFCA claims Suharto has turned Lilybank into a private safari park for foreign hunters and tourists, thereby locking out New Zealand recreationists. *"Thus those who personally profit from the dictatorship are investing their spoils in South Island rural purchases"* (ibid: 3). Irrespective of Suharto's political inclination, Lilybank has in fact been a semi-private safari park since 1970, when a New Zealand company took over the lease and developed a hunting and tourism venture for both domestic and international visitors. In the future a large proportion of Lilybank is likely to be transferred to the conservation estate, particularly as some 25, 000 ha was supposed to have been surrendered as the result of a run management plan in the 1980s (Ansley 1994).

Although some tourism ventures in the high country (supported by foreign investors or not) will depend upon private access, they will at least rely upon protecting the environment, through for example eco-tourism ventures. This is an important goal for all the interests groups in the high country. Restricting public access over selected parts of the high country may in some cases, have to be the compromise if environmentally sustainable land use is to be achieved. At a RFBPS seminar, regional field officer Eugenie Sage (pers. comm. 1995) expressed concern regarding foreign investors taking an interest in developing forestry schemes in the high country.

Yet forestry schemes have been lauded as a means of encouraging sustainable land use in the high country, and they need not restrict public access (Hughes 1993).

There is an expectation by several interest groups that foreign investment will lead to an erosion of free public access to high country lands. Denis Marshall however, assures critics of high country reform that public access will be improved through legal covenants, which in many cases will be entrenched during the tenure review process. Despite an increase in tourism in high country environments, the tourist market is not limitless. It will simply not be commercially viable for hundreds of exclusive tourism operations (foreign owned or not) to be developed in the high country. In spite of increased opportunities for foreign investment in the country, overseas ownership of high country properties need not restrict New Zealanders from gaining widespread access. This is particularly so as there are opportunities to make public access legally binding through the tenure reform process (an improvement on the present system), and because (as many critics point out) foreign owners will be "absent". It is irrational to argue that public access will decrease, simply because the owners are foreign, and yet the property manager is likely to be a New Zealander. Furthermore, the tenure reform process stands to make significant additions to the conservation estate. Thousands of hectares will be provided for public use which will never be able to be sold to foreigners, or anyone else.

7.8) Summary

Amidst a global context of internationalisation, foreign investment in New Zealand is likely to increase, particularly as the government streamlines the process for investing overseas capital in the New Zealand economy. As high country runholders look to diversify into new land uses, and alongside the tenure reform process, there are increased opportunities for foreign investment in the high country, through for example tourism, farm development, forestry, or as a speculative investment. Within the high country itself, there is a diversity of opinion regarding the issues of overseas ownership. Although several runholders in the field area expressed contempt toward foreign investors, many were interested in the financial benefits foreign investment offered.

The Foreign Direct Investment Advisory Group states that *"a major open-slather public debate on foreign investment could well move public opinion against foreign investment. The key task is to carefully strengthen the case for foreign investment, rather than to let loose some of the powerful negative and emotional arguments against foreign investment"* (in Ansley 1995: 20). Many New Zealanders are opposed to foreign investment in the country, particularly foreign ownership of rural land. This is exemplified in the symbolic and material landscapes of the high country, where it is perceived that the nation's natural and heritage values are under threat. Ultimately however, foreign ownership need not affect the way in which high country landscapes are valued and used. If New Zealanders can come to terms with the social implications of internationalisation, in which different cultures become increasingly connected by economic linkages, then the symbolic images for which the high country is valued need not be seen to be threatened. In fact, foreign investment in the high country may provide economic benefits and opportunities which can facilitate more sustainable land uses which help preserve high country environments.

Chapter Eight

High Country Landscapes - Production or Preservation

8.1) Introduction

Central to high country conflicts is debate over whether areas of the high country should be managed for production or preservation. Many farmers and nature conservationists hold contested meanings for "conservation".

Farmers assert that it is in their interests to conserve the environment upon which their livelihoods depend. Farmers argue that pastoral farming can be maintained in the high country without compromising conservation and public interest values. Conversely, nature conservationists contend that production, in particular pastoral farming, has had a devastating impact on high country environments. Nature conservationists assert that the present reform process provides an invaluable opportunity to preserve significant regions of the high country for conservation and public use.

Understandings of the conflicts between farmers and nature conservationists can be gained by examining the different perspectives upon which these groups clash. The tenure reform process has made the differences between nature conservationists and farmers more discernible. Despite these differences, there are opportunities for reconciliation.

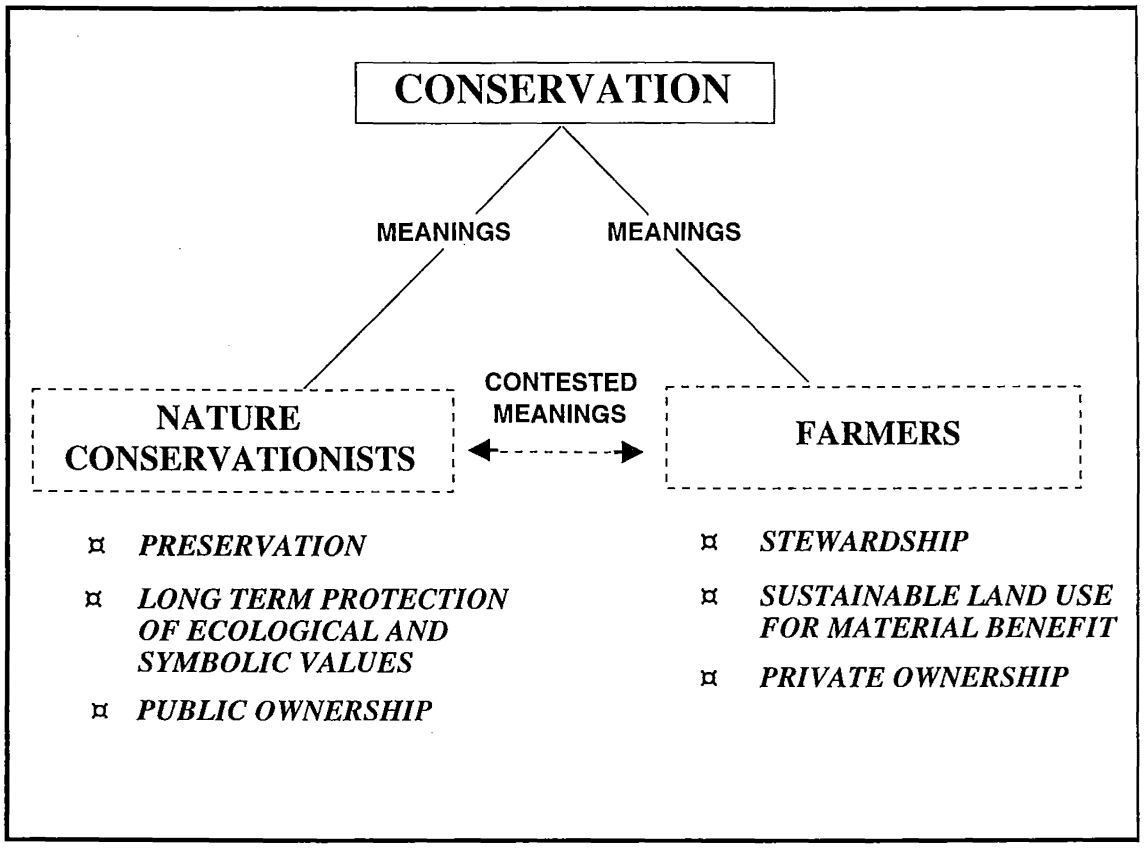


Figure 8.1: Different Perspectives on Conservation

8.2) Farmers' Perspective

For many farmers, conservation means caring for the productive values of the land for long term economic and social benefit. Many farmers consider themselves to hold the only tangible stake in high country land. Runholders' interest in the high country is based upon 140 years of occupation and use of the high country environment, which farmers maintain has provided economic benefits for the nation. By appealing to the national interest, farmers look to legitimate their claim to local resources. Federated Farmers (1992: 4) states that *"land is the farmers' lifeblood. It is too precious and too fragile to be exploited. High country farmers can only profit from the land by maintaining a healthy resource"*.

High country runholders maintain that farming and conservation are compatible. Many farmers argue that as the day to day managers, they are in the best position to judge the conservation values for the landscape. Some farmers argue that the reason conservation values remain in the high country is due to farming stewardship. One runholder stated that *"most farmers are conservationists. Farmers appreciate natural values. We can appreciate a clump of bush, or a lake and wetland just like anyone else. Farmers have a better idea than Forest and Bird about natural values on the land. The natural values have been the same here for years and we're not going to change them."*

Farmers argue that it is too late for much of the high country to be taken out of production and left to revert to its "natural state", because the land is in need of farming stewardship. Many farmers are frustrated that conservationists appear to want the benefits of the high country without without having to pay for land management. Farmers point out that the retirement of land to the Crown places a greater burden on taxpayers (*The Press* 23rd of March 1993). The South Island High Country Committee (SIHCC) (Federated Farmers 1992: 24) states that *"remembering conservation is paid for by the productive efforts of all New Zealanders, we believe that continued improved farming of the high country lands is both possible and can provide a valuable contribution"*

8.3) Local Perspectives on Conservation Management

Throughout the process of research it became apparent that there were many differences not only in the landscape characteristics (such as soil, climate, landforms and topography) between different high country properties, but also in the landscape values held by runholders. In many cases the land use pattern, as well as the runholders values toward the landscape, differed markedly from property to property. Given that high country farmers are often referred to generically, it is significant to find that they hold a multiplicity values toward land management. This is reflected in the study area, not only by the farmers' attitudes, but also their practices.

Many farmers believed that through investing in soil improvements, land development, and taking responsibility for pest and weed control, that they are "worthy stewards" of the land. One runholding family was frustrated that farmers' conservation measures were seldom recognised by politicians, land use planners and public interest groups. They felt that they should be compensated if they were to conserve land which the public utilised. As a result of past disagreements with nature conservationists, the family no longer allowed conservation groups access on their property.

Whereas one lessee was careful to run stock levels under the land's carrying capacity, past frustrations with planning controls meant that he allowed stock access to a number of small wetlands which nature conservationists wanted protected. Another farmer was frustrated by conservationist groups *"sticking their beaks in where they are not wanted"*. He saw conservationists as having little right to criticise farmers, because he believes farmers worked hard to care for the land. This was in spite of a farm policy to regularly burn grassland areas.

One lessee ran an effective topdressing programme to deal with weeds,but was concerned about the spread of rabbits on his property. The lessee conceded that some high country land is unsustainable for pastoral farming. He suggested that although some farmers are very conservation-minded, others do not consider the implications of farm management decisions. He felt that more farmers are becoming more "conservation oriented", particularly as they come to a better understanding of the processes affecting land management.

One farming family was confident that farmers and nature conservationists could find compromise within the high country. They saw farmers as *"conservation active"*. On their property they had undertaken an extensive programme of pest and weed management, irrigation, subdivision, plantations for erosion control and shelter, and experimented with different pastures. They had worked in with the Department of Conservation (DOC) to protect areas on their property valued for nature conservation. Unlike many other farmers they felt conservation groups have *"many valid points of view"*.

Many runholders are concerned that pest and weed problems proliferated in areas which were not under farm stewardship. This was exacerbated by the belief that DOC is understaffed and underfunded to deal with pest and weed management on conservation land. Several farmers complained about the spread of rabbits, possums, and hieracium, from DOC land onto their own properties which entailed additional management costs and placed stress upon valuable grazing land. One farmer commented that DOC cannot afford to look after the land it currently manages, let alone any more extensions to the conservation estate. Vice- chairman of the SIHCC, John Aspinall, states *"the Crown should be responsible for weed and pest management to the same extent as adjoining landowners"* (*New Zealand Farmer* August 24, 1994).

One runholder commented that *"erosion, pests and weeds will continue to cause problems even after complete destocking. In fact some weeds such as gorse, broom and wilding trees are demonstrably worse after the country is retired".* Another lessee suggested that *"DOC can't afford to manage the land they do own, let alone deal with the management problems involved with more additions to the conservation estate".* Another runholder stated that *"DOC are bloody hopeless. They have no idea how to deal with pest and weed control. DOC breed gorse and rabbits!".*

8.4) Farmers' Affinity to Land

The high country "community" has developed a considerable sense of affinity toward the environment they live and work in (Dominy 1993b). In some cases a sense of stewardship has been built up over several generations. Although high country farming is often depicted as a production oriented process, many high country farming families have developed a relationship with the environment associated with a set of symbolic values, in which the high country is seen to be the setting for their spiritual as well as material home.

Rather than an economic interest, nearly all of the runholders interviewed in the field area claimed they lived in the high country because of the attractive lifestyle. For example, one runholder claimed their shift to the high country was a *"lifestyle choice... we love the area. It's not a money maker though. If we were interested in making money then we would have milked cows".*

A consistent theme became apparent that runholders were motivated to live in the high country not simply by the material gains to be made, but because of the *"way of life"*, free from the perceived *"hassles of living in town"*. One lessee stated that he had *"lived in the back country since 1936... and loved every minute of it. The vastness of it all appeals and there aren't too many people breathing down your neck"*.

Through a study of the Canterbury high country, Murray (1986: 219) uses a range of responses to illustrate high country farmers' affinity with their environment: *"Independent life, challenge and solitude"; "The lifestyle, a good environment to work in"; "Scenery, hills rather than flats, clean air, lack of people"*. Murray notes however, that some high country farmers had difficulty explaining what it was they liked about the landscape. For some runholders, living in the high country was a way of maintaining a family tradition: *"I'm oriented toward this life, I'm born and bred here, it's what I know"* (ibid).

The farming families who inhabit the high country have forged a distinct identity from the environment, based upon their relationship with the land. Dominy (1993a: 319) states that high country farmers *"conceptualise the land they inhabit as pastoral, but not solely as commodity"*. Dominy suggests that runholders' relationship to the land is mediated through stock. One farmer commented that he enjoys farming merinos and cattle which are well suited to the high country environment, as opposed to for example dairy farming. For many runholders therefore, it is not so much the material benefits to be enjoyed from living in the high country (as many urban based interest groups contend), but the practice of farming and the relationship it bears with the landscape, that makes living and working in the high country attractive.

As high country farming families have moved to the social, economic and political margins of their culture they have elaborated the symbolic dimension of their lives, through for example farm tourism. In the Kaikoura high country for example, the runholders at Cloudy Range have redeveloped the old homestead for farm-stay accommodation. The accommodation is marketed for domestic and international tourists *"wanting to experience the magic of the pioneering way of life on a high country station, away from the hustle and bustle of the city and towns"* (Press July 27, 1995).

One farmer even suggested that in order to protect their way of life, the farming community should claim "cultural heritage" status under the Resource Management Act 1991 (*The Press* August 15, 1994). Dominy (1993b: 580) sees the high country farming community's attempt to articulate their spiritual affinity with the land *"as part of their engagement in a process of contestation in New Zealand over whose rights to land prevail. Theirs is a contest for habitation, a localised version of identity construction in the nation state context".*

In the course of field work it became apparent that although runholders seldom expressed their symbolic attachment to the land openly, many exhibited objects and practises that held symbolic meaning. This was reflected through for example, the array of old photos of high country scenes, antique farm implements, and paintings of the high country landscape evident in several homesteads.

In spite of high country runholders apparent affinity for their environment, like farmers elsewhere, they have often been subject to significant pressures to increase production, in some cases at the expense of the environment. Amidst a context of growing concerns for environmental and economic sustainability, pastoralism and the rights of lessees have been challenged as being in direct conflict with the values of nature conservationists.

8.5) Nature Conservationists' Perspective

Nature conservationist groups such as the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (RFBPS) claim they represent the interests of the public in the high country. Nature conservationists are inspired by the unique ecological values the high country holds and the symbolic images it arouses. *"Even those who challenge the rights of runholders adhere to the logic of romance the landscape holds"* (Dominy 1993a: 320). This is reflected for example in a recent RFBPS publication (August 1995: 14); *"The South Island high country looms large in the eyes of New Zealanders. Its impressionable images are well known. Wide open vistas, tawny tussock slopes, deep glacial lakes, rugged mountain tops and sparse scattered settlements. If people have not experienced this remarkable landscape first-hand, they have at least savoured these characteristic images in books, advertisements and tourist promotions".*

Nature conservationists are concerned that pastoral farming has had a devastating impact upon the high country environment, and that as a consequence, many unique native plants and animals have become endangered or extinct. As wilderness and natural areas become increasingly scarce, nature conservationists have argued that the landscape values for the high country are not just nationally, but internationally important. *"Protection of the high country's remaining indigenous character - its beech and totara forest remnants, shrublands, wetlands, lakes, mountain tops, scree communities, and tussocklands from continued burning, grazing and farming is now urgent"* (RFBPS 1995).

RFBPS's goal is to restore the native biodiversity of the high country through the establishment of a connected system of parks and reserves. Their goal reflects a move away from an era of "monumentalism" where discrete sites of inspirational scenery were protected, to the *"preservation of the ecological integrity and richness of indigenous landscapes"* (RFBPS August 1995: 17).

The RFBPS (ibid: 20) envisages that *"human settlement and commercial activities would still continue of course - albeit on a reduced and more focused scale"*. Production in the high country would encompass a more diverse range of small and sustainable land uses based in localised areas of modified land, where the indigenous vegetation has already been irreversibly transformed by pastoralism. RFBPS argues that *"the eventual rewards - economic, social, spiritual - will exceed the likely benefits from continued extensive pastoralism. Food and fibre production can be adapted to occur on many other more seriously modified landscapes"* (ibid).

Many nature conservationists argue that the present conservation estate protects the more remote and wetter alpine areas and forests, but that high country ecosystems and landscape on the flanks of these alpine rangelands are under-represented (Roche 1981). Nature conservationists are particularly concerned that there are very few representative areas of tussock grasslands and high country wetlands protected for conservation management. The RFBPS hopes that the tenure review process will redress what they see as a lack of balance of native species in the conservation estate.

8.6) Farmers' View of Nature Conservationists.

"It's a tragedy, the way farming is being restricted under the guise of conservation... Conservation groups get their money from little old ladies who see giant rimu being cut down and send in $5,000 to support the cause. Conservationists include some of the most radical people I have ever met" (*New Zealand Farmer* August 24, 1995).

Many farmers believe urban New Zealanders misunderstand what it involves to manage a high country property. One runholder states that *"we have a bunch of urban stirrers and academic know-alls assuming they can make a better job of managing the land than those people who are in fact its day-to-day managers and caretakers"* (Hutching 1986:14). One lessee felt that conservation groups spread misconceptions and half-truths about the practices of high country farmers in order to push their own agenda. Many farmers are concerned that policy makers and urban voters have a poor understanding not only of farming, but also of the physical processes which occur in the high country. Federated Farmers (1995: 2) points to research which suggests that erosion blamed on high country pastoralism was already happening at the same rate prior to human settlement. *"This is now largely attributed to the area's natural instability because geologically the Southern Alps are very young".*

Although many farmers claim to be conservation minded, their notion of "conservation" differs fundamentally to nature conservationists. Several runholders were bemused by the view of conservation espoused by nature conservationists which held no apparent productive value. One runholder was concerned that nature conservationists were intent on *"turning the high country into a bird and plant sanctuary"* of little value to the national economy. The farmer pointed out that by reinvesting in the land through for example topdressing and oversowing, farmers undertook valuable conservation measures which were good for the land and helped contribute to the economy. Another lessee joked that extensions to the conservation estate would allow nature conservationists *"to grow their flowers and talk to their plants".*

8.7) Nature Conservationists View of Farmers

Just as many farmers are concerned by the views of urban based environmental organisations, nature conservationists argue that farming over much of the high country jeopardises wider public interest values. Ansley (1994: 24) summarises the view commonly held by conservation and recreation lobby groups that *"high country cockies have had it pretty good. They've been living off the public purse for years, by cheap rentals, then by subsidies. And what have they given us in return? They've occupied some of the choicest parts of the mountains and exercised seigneurial rights: the masses enter at the farmers' pleasure. They've steadily run down those beautiful, fragile tracts of country until they're overrun by rabbits and weed".*

High country farmers have often been characterised as exploitative in that they depend upon utilization of natural soil and vegetative resources for material gain. Graham (1987: 101) characterises hill country pastoralism as *"bad"*, because land is treated merely as an input in the production process of stock for sale off farms. *"Farmers tend to live 'off' the land rather than 'in' or 'with' it... This is the capitalistic frame of mind in which most farmers and institutions make decisions and which preclude consideration for the long-term welfare of the land for its own sake"* (ibid). Hasselmann (1989: 87) believes that *"all farmers would agree that farming is exploitative... farmers have made an investment in the land by clearing, over-sowing and fencing, the overall aim being production in order to gain their investment back and make a profit".*

In contrast to the romantic view of high country farming, some urban based conservation groups regard high country farming families as comprising an elite, amassing wealth over generations and being supported by a government influenced by a powerful farming lobby. Following a period of state deregulation, some groups resent the implication that high country runholders are state-subsidised (through a concessional rental system). Dominy (ibid) suggests that part of the urban sentiment is a resentment both of privilege (evidenced for example by surnames inherited from early Canterbury settlers) and of large-scale land management. Negative feelings toward pastoral lessees also stem from a sense that the high country is national land, and should belong to no one.

8.8) Urban Based Environmental Interests

Several commentators (Eckersley 1989; Scott 1989) suggest that the modern conservation movement is the domain of upper-middle class urban intellectuals and professionals whose beliefs have been *"nourished with many cherished, often irreconcilable myths"* (O'Connor 1980: 195), one of which is the benignity of nature. Farmers argue that many urban New Zealanders have no or little practical experience of farming and that they are divorced from the realities of living in the harsh high country environment. Consequently many urban New Zealanders conceptualise the high country from the positive symbolic impressions they receive in terms of advertisements, photographs, paintings and books in which the high country is largely romanticised.

The South Island High Country Review (1994: 76) noted that in many instances, urban people had limited knowledge and understanding of the issues facing the high country. The Review concluded that management problems such as rabbits and hieracium were often poorly understood, and the interconnectedness with other resource management difficulties was not appreciated. The Martin Committee noted for example, that the popular image of the rabbit in Western culture (Easter Bunny, Watership Downs, Beatrix Potter and Bugs Bunny), made it difficult for people who have no first hand experience to believe in the land devastation that rabbits can cause.

Conservationist and spokesperson for High Country Public Lands Coalition (HCPLC), Brian Turner, concedes that *"it is easier to view the high country in abstract ways when it is not relied on directly for a living"* (Roberts and Turner 1983: 11). Nevertheless, Turner argues that although many people involved in the conservation movement are urban based and are of above intelligence, this is because they have acquired sufficient scientific knowledge to understand the environmental problems of the high country. Turner suggests that the conservation movement does not constitute a significant number of the *"struggling working class"*, because they are too concerned with making enough money for the next meal to be able to afford *"sentimental nods and spiritual flights of fancy about the virtues and importance of respecting and caring for the natural environment"* (ibid).

The clash of interests between nature conservationists and farmers, was recently highlighted at the 1995 Federated Farmers High Country Conference. Regional Field Officer for RFBPS, Eugenie Sage, condemned the farming practises of many runholders. Ms Sage commented that it was unreasonable for conservation groups to trust farmers with conservation, given the destruction of extensive areas of tussock grasslands during 140 years of pastoralism (*New Zealand Farmer* June 15, 1995; *Straight Furrow* July 3, 1995). Ms Sage stated during the conference *"the fact that farmers are running a business and are interested in maximising the returns from the capital and human energy invested in the property, puts lower-altitude grasslands in particular at risk"* (*New Zealand Farmer* June 15, 1995).

One farmer congratulated Ms Sage for effectively driving the wedge deeper between conservationists and farmers, *"I'd have been extremely disappointed had your address not included anything other than the usual cliches, disproven theories from pseudo-scientists, and emotive rhetoric"* (*Straight Furrow* July 3, 1995).

In his annual address, Chairman of the SIHCC, Bob Brown stated that the South Island high country community is under threat as never before. *"Not only are our farming and management practises being questioned, but our very right to occupy and farm the land is increasingly being challenged. The challenge is often from those urban people who do not understand our reasons or do not accept them"* (*New Zealand Farmer* June 15, 1995). Mr Brown suggested that some of the negative statements towards the high country farming community, offered the chance for interest groups to increase their membership, but were otherwise detrimental for the goal of long term sustainability in the high country (ibid).

8.9) Conflicts Over the Tenure Review Process and Legislative Reform

Although the HCPLC initially favoured the manner with which the tenure reform process was proceeding, following the release of the Crown Pastoral Land Bill, several interest groups withdrew their support. Conservation groups are concerned that the Bill will peripheralise the protection of public interest values.

Ms Sage (pers. comm. 1995) states that RFBPS oppose the Bill *"because it marginalises the protection of nature and provides a legal framework for the freeholding and permanent alienation from public ownership of large tracts of the high country".*

Of particular concern to conservationists is that the Crown Pastoral Land Bill will limit the extent of high country land that can be assigned to the conservation estate to land with "high inherent values". "Inherent values" are defined rather ambiguously in the Bill as the land's natural resources, and its recreational, cultural and historical values. Conservationists had envisaged that freeholding would be limited to land that has been improved or could be intensively farmed. Instead the Crown Pastoral Land Bill allows freeholding on "land capable of productive use", including farming, forestry, commercial recreation and tourism. Conservationists are concerned that the Bill opens the way for widespread freeholding, because any land that is capable of commercial activity is potentially available for sale. Conservationist Mike Harding (RFBPS August 1995: 18), argues that there is no analogous restriction which limits freeholding to land with "high" productive value. *"The Bill's minimalist approach to nature is a prescription for postage stamp reserves, not ecosystem protection"* (ibid).

Rather than limiting pastoral activity to "land capable of sustainable farming", conservationists are concerned that the tenure reform process will allow pastoralism to continue to degrade extensive areas of fragile high country land. Eugenie Sage (pers. comm. 1995) suspects that Mr Marshall initiated the review of the Land Act with good intent, but it has been *"hijacked"* by Treasury to allow the privatization of pastoral lease land for commercial purposes.

Federated Farmers argues that the Crown Pastoral Land Bill will benefit the farming community and the wider public. Public relations manager for Federated Farmers, Paul Jackman (in *Dominion* June 9, 1995), argues that freeholding will give farmers a more secure sense of ownership and greater freedom to diversify land use, thus facilitating environmentally sustainable land uses. *"Farmers have a greater incentive to nurture their land. It is human nature to look after that which one fully owns. Uncertainty, engendered by the current debate, is not good for long term land management"* (Federated Farmers 1995: 3). Conservation groups point out farmers are bound to favour measures which allow for extensive freeholding of high country land.

Federated Farmers accepts that pastoral farming is not the best land use for all high country land, and that imposing grazing (as the present Act does) to much of the high country is economically and ecologically inappropriate. The SIHCC argues that freeholding will facilitate a more diverse range of land uses, including tourism, forestry and horticulture, which may be better suited to the local ecologies of different high country properties. Mr Jackman (*Dominion* June 9, 1995) argues that freeholding will encourage diversification, by which farmers will have more opportunity to earn extra income to reinvest in their land, thus increasing farm sustainability and biodiversity. The SIHCC argues that public interests will be better served by the high country reform process because there will be extensions to the conservation estate, a more diverse range of sustainable land uses, and public access will improve through legal covenants.

Additionally, Federated Farmers contends that the Land Bill will end the "buck-passing" of the current legislative regime, by which lessees have often blamed the Government for their difficulties, and the Government blamed runholders. Freehold farmers will have to take full responsibility for farm management, and the Crown will be responsible for its estate. *"Clear responsibilities based on conventional property rights will do the high country a world of good, as elsewhere"* (*New Zealand Farmer* April 12, 1995).

The HCPLC contends the present Land Act is only in need of a few significant changes, because land use in the high country has diversified anyway. Conversely, Federated Farmers and Mr Marshall argue that legislative reform will facilitate further diversification which will encourage sustainable land use. Many runholders see the present high country administrative framework as a bureaucratic jumble which hinders a change in land use. This was reflected by two runholding families who cited bureaucratic hassles as a reason for getting out of tourism ventures. Similarly, another lessee was interested in developing a forestry programme but was frustrated by planning restrictions relating to leasehold land. Some of these *"bureaucratic hassles"* are examined in more detail in section 8.10 and 8.11.

Federated Farmers believes that the whole property should be negotiated for in the tenure review process, and that freeholding should not be restricted to lowland areas suitable for farming. The SIHCC threatens that (Federated Farmers 1992) if commercial activity is restricted to areas of extensively modified land (as RFBPS wish), then some farmers may lose the incentive to proceed with the tenure reform process. Therefore pastoral farming would be likely to continue on such high country properties, and there will be no gains to the conservation estate, and no formal access rights. Mr Marshall (*Press* March 23, 1995) warns that *"if the status quo remains then conservationists may forgo the opportunity to have increased access and better protection for up to a million hectares of conservation land".*

Recreational groups such as Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) assert that land above 1, 000 metres should automatically be retired to the conservation estate (*New Zealand Farmer* August 24, 1994). In contrast, Mr Aspinall argues that the *"land should not be looked at for its capability for grazing"* (ibid). Mr Aspinall cites the example of Waiorau station, where the Lee family places a high value on the mountain tops for skiing (Cardrona ski field and a nordic ski field), as well as an international vehicle testing track. Over 80% of Waiorau station is over 1, 500 metres, which has severe limitations for farming. The Lee family now has freehold title to 2, 700ha of which 1, 000ha is above 1, 500 metres, with 4,000ha being assigned to DOC. Mr Lee states that *"there are tremendous opportunities for this land that exist under freeholding that did not exist under leaseholding. Even just going to the bank for finance is one"* (*New Zealand Farmer* August 24, 1994).

Although at the national scale, Federated Farmers supports the Crown Pastoral Land Bill and has espoused the benefits of freeholding, at the local scale, there is a diversity of opinion. Generally however, most runholders were enthusiastic about the opportunities to freehold land and gain more flexible land use options. Some farmers however, were concerned about the effects that conservation and recreational lobby groups could have on negotiations. Additionally, some farmers were reluctant to retire parts of their property given their spiritual attachment to the land, which in some cases had been fostered over generations.

One lessee commented that the changes to the Land Act 1948 would allow more flexibility for those farmers who were prepared to undergo the review process. He felt that freehold would be advantageous for his property if it was not too expensive, or if it did not involve relinquishing too much land. Another lessee was concerned that some farmers which had few areas of land of high public interest on their properties, would be unable to bargain for freehold title.

Two runholding families depended upon freehold title for their tourist developments and were interested in further opportunities to freehold land. They regarded freehold title as necessary in order to overcome some of the planning restrictions of the Land Act. One of the runholders felt however, that in some cases tenure made little difference because *"farmers think the land is their own anyway"*. Another lessee felt that the more freehold land farmers could obtain the better, because farmers cared for the land and took responsibility for pest and weed management, as well as providing for public access. One farmer noted the reform would make it easier to gain freehold title, although at the moment he was content with his current leasehold arrangement. One lessee commented that freeholding would make it easier for farmers to undergo a change in land use because they would not need to gain planning consent from Landcorp (as well as district and regional councils). As several properties in the region are owned by Canterbury University, these runholders suggested the high country reform process was unlikely to have a bearing on them until the University made a decision on the future of its land.

8.10) Private or Public Protection

The development of the tenure review process presents an opportunity to negotiate access rights and the protection of conservation values on many high country properties. The government favours private protective mechanisms as a way of enhancing private responsibility for the protection of conservation values, and as a means of limiting the State's fiscal responsibility for the provision of access rights and land management. The Crown Pastoral Land Bill specifically allows for the establishment of protective covenants to ensure public access to private land, and to help facilitate sustainable management of areas of high conservation value.

The South Island High Country Review (1994: 61) notes that management of nature conservation values can be shared between the Crown and private land owners; *"Increased understanding and involvement of landholders and the public in multiple uses of land will achieve a better protection of a range of conservation values".*

The Queen Elizabeth II National Trust (QEII) was set up to administer open space covenants under the QEII National Trust Act 1977. The QEII Trust aims to preserve distinctive landscapes or, as most commonly occurs, to protect particular conservation features within a landscape. To encourage protection measures, the Trust may contribute to legal costs or the costs incurred in establishing the covenant, such as fencing. Although there are few covenants presently established in the high country, the tenure review process is likely to result in a range of protective covenants being established (including QEII covenants). Covenants are likely to be used as a means to facilitate public access, and to encourage preservation of unique ecological features such as wetlands, and areas of rare flora of fauna.

Some runholders expressed interest in covenants as a means of relieving recreational and conservation lobby group pressure for preservation, and retaining land in private ownership. Conversely some runholders felt covenants were pointless, as they claimed they exercised wise farming stewardship and allowed free public access anyway. For some farmers, protective covenants would involve limiting grazing on sites of ecological significance, or ensuring legal public access to areas valued for recreation.

Many conservationists are worried that the Government is not prepared to commit the resources to ensure that extensive areas of the high country are retired and managed by DOC for conservation. Eugenie Sage (pers. comm. 1995) was concerned that the Government will favour private management of conservation as a way of reducing its' financial responsibilities. Ms Sage felt that this would be at the expense of wider public interest values for the high country.

Recreational and conservation groups oppose covenants on the basis that they do not adequately protect natural ecosystems, and because farmers can easily circumvent their regulations. RFBPS feels that the conditions of covenants are difficult to monitor and enforce. Recreational and conservation groups favour the protection of public interest values through full Crown ownership. *"No covenant can begin to match the security, accountability and public remedies available when land becomes part of the conservation estate"* (RFBPS August 1995: 15). RFBPS has declared their "vision" for the creation of a comprehensive network of protected natural areas, to be held in Crown ownership. They hope that the tenure review process will implement contemporary concepts of nature conservation by taking account of entire ecosystems, catchments and landscapes. Many nature conservationists argue that the long term future of the high country (and the interests of the "public") would be better served by establishing a series of high country conservation parks and reserves held in public ownership.

Within the field area, two different schemes are examined which provide insights into the conflicts arising from conservation management plans.

8.11) Torlesse Conservation Park Proposal

In 1990 a conflict of interests developed between local runholders and nature conservationists following a proposal by RFBPS to establish the Torlesse Range as a conservation park (Figure 8.2). The conflict represents a local clash between the production interests of farmers, and the desire for environmental preservation by nature conservationists.

The Torlesse Range was identified by RFBPS as a region suitable for a public conservation park which could be utilised for recreation and scientific research. In addition, a conservation park would enforce the protection of a range of rare flora and fauna, including original mountain beech forest stands, weta, butterflies, skinks, hebe, buttercup, and unique landforms such as scree slopes. The RFBPS gained the support of local councillors, conservationists, and recreational groups, and began to lobby for DOC to take control over management of the region. *"Close to the hearts of many Cantabrians, it has significance beyond Canterbury for its place in botanical exploration of the country and its importance for mountainland research"* (RFBPS November 1990: 20).

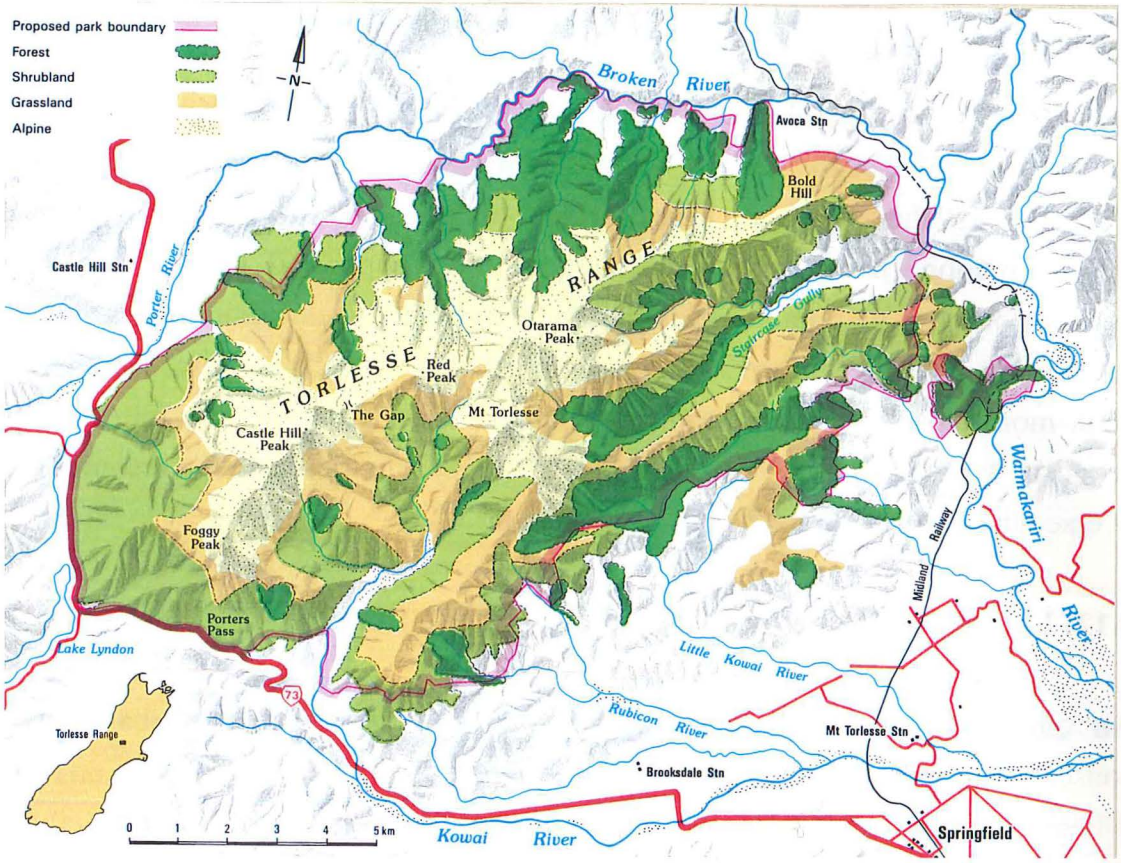


Figure 8.2: Torlesse Conservation Park Proposal

(Source: RFBPS November 1990: 19)

Although forested parts of the Torlesse Range are under DOC stewardship, most of the range is under pastoral tenure. The RFBPS argued that the Range was no longer important for grazing, and that there was high local support for its protection. The local runholders however, were dismayed at the lack of consultation by both DOC and RFBPS. Conversely, Eugenie Sage (pers. comm. 1995) commented that the lessees had ample consultation. Two of the runholders were particularly concerned that they stood to lose what they considered to be significant areas of grazing land if the proposal went ahead. Furthermore, they felt they had not received adequate offers of compensation for land retired in the range. The farmers considered that pastoralism did not jeopardise the natural values for the area, and they had a generous tradition of providing recreational access on the land.

The proposal lapsed because the runholders refused to agree to relinquish significant tracts of land for grazing. One farmer suggested that Forest and Bird generated a considerable amount of publicity for the proposal in order to increase public support for the scheme. This was in spite of the runholders' indifference to the proposal. One of the farmers confronted a member of RFBPS involved in the planning of the proposal. The farmer alleged that RFBPS had spread misinformation (particularly that the runholders supported the Conservation Park) in order to gain public backing for the scheme. Both runholders indicated that they might have agreed to a compromise with the park proposal if they had been more closely involved with negotiations. One of the lessees felt that the proposal was not a priority for DOC, and that DOC did not have the resources to oversee the proposal anyway.

8.12) Landscape Guidelines - A Local Protective Initiative

An ongoing source of contention between local farmers and urban based conservation interests has arisen over the Upper Waimakariri Scenic Corridor. Whereas the Torlesse Conservation Park Proposal aimed to separate land valued for conservation and recreation from production land, the landscape corridor is a planning mechanism which regulates the impacts of human activity upon the landscape.

The Upper Waimakariri Landscape Guidelines are a protective mechanism designed to give recognition to the region's landscape values. The corridor concept is designed to guide the way land use development is undertaken so that it is *"sympathetic"* with existing landscape characteristics (Bennett and Lucas 1992: 3). The Landscape Corridor's boundaries were established by determining the visual catchment of State Highway 73 and the Trans-Alpine railway (Figure 8.3).

The Landscape Guidelines are based upon a desire to preserve the *"integrity, naturalness and unity"* of the high country landscape (Lucas pers. comm. 1995). The Guidelines recognise the aesthetics of the high country landscape as the most important value, because the aesthetic landscape is the setting for one's experience; directly for example through tourism and recreation, and indirectly through for example photos, movies, paintings and advertisements (ibid).

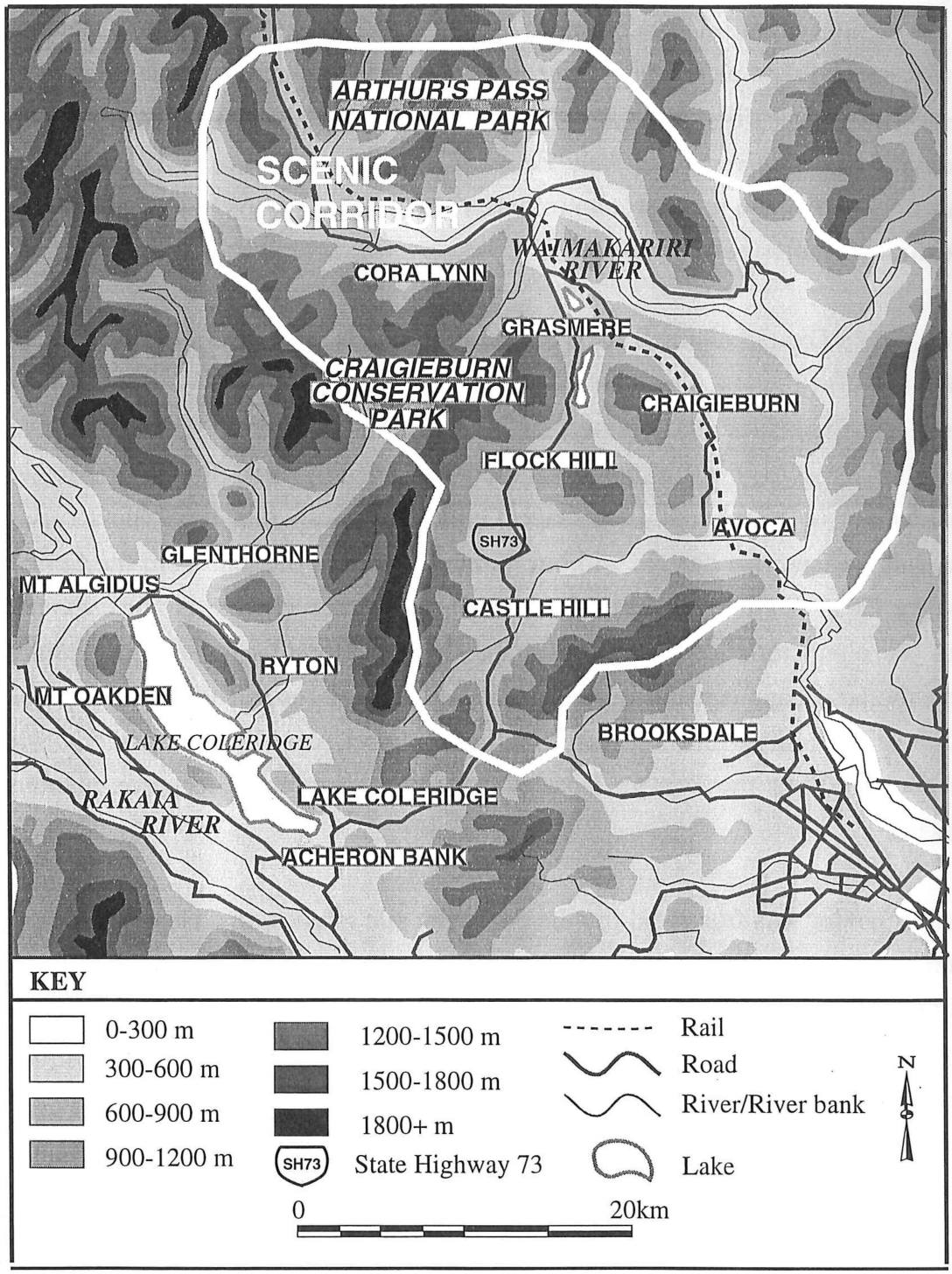


Figure 8.3: Upper Waimakariri Scenic Corridor

The landscape corridor concept was initiated by a number of landscape architects from Christchurch in the 1970s, who were supported by local conservation groups. Financial support was provided by the Canterbury Tourism Council.

The former Malvern County Council (whose responsibilities have been assumed within the Selwyn District Council) was receptive to the idea of a visual corridor in the region (Challies pers. comm. 1995). The Corridor recognises the Upper Waimakariri Basin as a *"significant part of the natural and cultural heritage of the country. Here there is a special opportunity to experience what is unique and beautiful about this part of New Zealand"* (Bennett and Lucas 1992: 3). The Corridor is designed to protect an important visual asset with considerable tourist potential (Challies pers. comm. 1995).

The Selwyn District Council have adopted the Landscape Guidelines for the area into their district plan. For the runholders who farm the Upper Waimakariri, the Landscape Corridor has important implications. Several runholders were frustrated that they were not consulted adequately when the Corridor was established. In effect, the Landscape Guidelines mean that runholders cannot undertake a land use change without gaining planning consent from the Selwyn District Council (in addition to Landcorp), unless the change is *"in harmony"* with the characteristics of the landscape. In practice this means that features upon the landscape (including roads, tracks, fences, houses, sheds) and land use activities (including farming, forestry, horticulture) must be "sympathetic with the landscape" or the Selwyn District Council may refuse a resource planning consent.

One runholder was frustrated that he could not site a fence on a chosen site. Two other lessees were declined consent to plant forestry blocks, because they were judged to have an adverse impact upon the region's visual quality. The lessees were annoyed that they were unable to undertake what they considered to be a profitable and sustainable land use. One farmer considered the Landscape Corridor an *"invasion of land rights. Why should individuals in one area of New Zealand have their rights interfered with?"*. One runholder vented opposition to the Landscape Corridor because he felt it placed too many restrictions on land development in the area. He was frustrated by people who do not live in the high country making important decisions which affected high country development. He felt that evidence of farm production and development *"makes the land look interesting"*. One farmer was frustrated with the Corridor because he could not gain planning consent to rebuild a hay shed which was in disrepair. In contrast, one family agreed with the principle of the Corridor, because it helped protect the region's native vegetation.

A similar visual corridor is being planned for the Lake Coleridge district. Several runholders in the area however, were dismayed at the lack of consultation they had received over the issue. One family felt that the Corridor concept was unpractical. They felt the consultation they had been involved with was *"cosmetic"*, and that the Council was not prepared to listen to any of their alternatives. One lessee felt the Landscape Guidelines were a *"sad reflection on the ignorance of people who suggest that such things will actually achieve the desired outcome"*. He felt that it would mean *"more bureaucratic interference and bungling"* for farm management. *"There has been no attempt to understand the local viewpoint or advice"*. One lessee suggested farmers would ignore the implications of the Corridor and continue to farm as they always had.

The Corridor is an example of a local planning initiative which is designed to protect the conservation values for a particular high country region. For the people who live and work in the high country, the Landscape Guidelines are commonly seen as an unpractical bureaucratic measure, which places many restrictions on land development. Most of the lessees see the Corridor as a planning control imposed by and for people who do not live in the high country. The fact that the concept has developed in the Upper Waimakariri Basin reflects the area's proximity to a major urban centre and its' importance as a region for recreation, tourism, and academic interest. The Corridor embodies the symbolic values of the high country held by many urban New Zealanders.

8.13) Summary

High country farmers and nature conservationists have fundamental differences of opinion regarding the concept of conservation. Whereas farmers believe that as the stewards of the land they care for the conservation values of the high country, nature conservationists argue that conservation can only be achieved through environmental protection.

Runholders maintain that it is in the farming community's interest to conserve the environment within which they live. Farmers see themselves as the stewards of the high country who exercise wise husbandry over the land in order to yield economic benefit for themselves and the nation. Many farmers argue the best way to achieve sustainable land use in the high country is through private ownership.

Conversely, nature conservationists believe that high country pastoralism is exploitative in that it makes use of the environment's natural habitat for material gain. Conservationists argue that the native vegetation of the high country should be preserved by the Crown in order to provide long term benefits (recreational, scientific, aesthetic, ecological) for the public.

In the high country landscapes a conflict of values between production and preservation interests is based upon contested meanings for conservation. At the national scale this is clearly illustrated by the debate between Federated Farmers and the RFBPS. The differences between nature conservationists and farmers are not however, as irreconcilable as they may first appear. In high country environments there are opportunities for compromise. Providing there is ample consultation and the review process is adequately funded, then tenure reform offers opportunities to find locally based resolutions which provide benefits for both production and preservation interests.

Chapter Nine

Resolution of High Country Conflicts?

9.1) Introduction

"Landscapes can be deceptive. Sometimes a landscape seems to be less a setting for the life of its inhabitants than a curtain behind which their struggles, achievements and accidents take place. For those who, with the inhabitants, are behind the curtains, landmarks are no longer geographic but also biographical and personal" (Berger in Cosgrove 1984: 271).

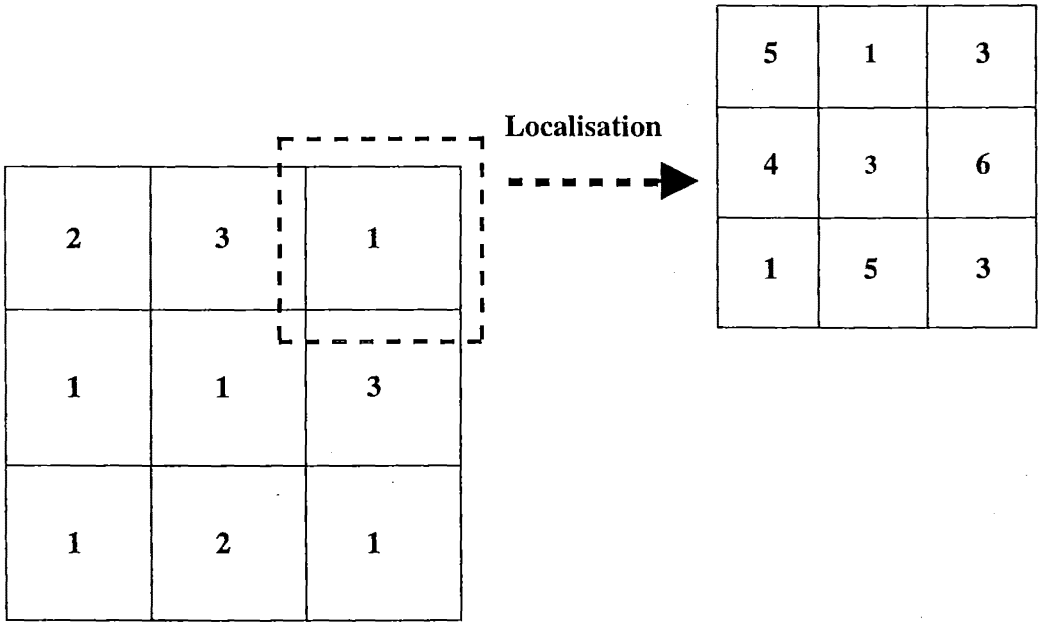
High country landscapes have become the setting for a number of conflicts, contested by a diverse range of interests. This thesis has provided an explanation for these "struggles" by examining the contexts, and attempting to draw back the curtains behind which different interest groups demand a role in the control and use of high country environments. The purpose of this chapter is to review the underlying causes of high country conflicts and to bring together the thesis objectives and major research findings.

9.2) Summary of Findings

The high country means various different things to different people. For many New Zealanders, high country landscapes are regarded as fundamental sources of national identity and heritage. Many New Zealanders seek a role in the processes which have led to conflicts because they hold a symbolic stake in the management of high country environments. In a postmodern era characterised by plurality of meanings for in landscape, many New Zealanders embrace a symbolic attachment to high country lands in order to define their identity.

In a material sense the high country has historically been important as a landscape in which to derive economic gain, particularly from wool production. More recently however, high country environments have become valued and utilised for a more diverse range of commercial and non-commercial land uses such as tourism and and nature conservation, by a variety of groups with potentially conflicting interests.

The emergence of a more diverse range of values for high country landscapes has become apparent amidst a changing political economic, environmental and cultural context. There has been growing concern and support for environmental preservation. In the high country, traditional pastoral systems have been increasingly challenged as ecologically unsustainable. In addition, economic restructuring, state deregulation and the effects of globalisation have created new opportunities for commercial development in high country lands. Change has come not only from forces external to the high country, but also internally, as inhabitants of high country lands look to preserve their way of life by capturing new and profitable markets, such as farm tourism and forestry.



1 **Pastoral Landscapes**
2 **Hydro Power Landscapes**
3 **Conservation Lands**
4 **Tourism**
5 **Forestry**
6 **Commercial Recreation**

Figure 9.1: High Country Pastoral Lands - Localisation of Interests

The emergence of a range of commercial and non-commercial (material and symbolic) values for high country landscapes has created the potential for incompatible and conflicting land uses. Previously high country conflicts have been minimised because different land uses were clearly separated, both socially and spatially.

It is within this context in which an increasing number of landscape values have become apparent for high country lands, that conflicts have escalated. A number of key conflicts have developed at different spatial scales. In particular a clash of values has arisen between runholders, who assert that pastoral farming can be sustainably managed without jeopardising public interest values, and nature conservationists, who claim that the fragile high country environments should be preserved for national benefit. In addition, recreational groups have expressed concern that reforms may lead to the public being restricted access to many areas of the high country, particularly as they fear foreign investors will find increased opportunities to purchase land for exclusive tourist developments. Furthermore, a number of interest groups have vented opposition toward Maori attempts to regain a role in the management of high country landscapes. More recently, a process of legislative reform has been forged to try and reconcile some of these differences which stem from a conflict of values.

Although high country conflicts are contested both nationally and regionally, it is at the local scale that the conflicts are most clearly manifested. It is from the local scale that insights can be drawn to clarify some of the differences between the varied interests. Research material drawn from the Upper Waimakariri and Upper Rakaia high country provided specific details of some of the key conflicts which are being contested in high country environments. Although the field area illustrated a range of characteristics typical of high country regions, it also exhibits a number of differences both within the field area and compared to other high country landscapes.

The research material confirms that there is no one discourse of the high country. Within the field area there exists a diverse range of values. Just as there are physical differences between different high country properties, various runholders hold different values toward the landscape. The process of localisation illustrated in Figure 9.1, is therefore likely to differ not just between different high country regions, but from property to property.

Responses from the runholders suggests that high country conflicts are perceived and thereby manifested in different ways. Therefore, their resolution calls upon a process which recognises these local variations.

9.3) The Ideal Solution?

The tenure reform process refutes a modernist conceptualisation of the high country, which has in the past been an underlying assumption in the regulatory framework of high country landscapes. A universal view of high country lands, in which the tussock grasslands are seen as having one common value for pastoral production (embraced by for example the 1948 Land Act), has been challenged and a more diverse range of landscape values have been acknowledged. Trevor Howse summarised the nature of the reform process when he pointed out that all the high country runs and the runholders are different. *"The high country involves different geographies and different values"* (pers. comm. 1995).

The tenure reform process aims to enhance sustainable land management and accommodate a diverse range of landscape values by finding locally based solutions. Despite a number of significant differences between a range of groups who claim a role in the management of high country landscapes, the tenure reform process provides an opportunity for compromise which enables the range of landscape values for the high country to be accommodated. The reform process however, continues to be restricted by a number of implementation problems, particularly as different groups try to further their interests. As the reforms proceed it remains to be seen whether these different interests can be successfully reconciled.

Situated between the shores of Lake Dunstan and the peaks of Dunstan Range in Central Otago resides Bendigo Station. The leaseholders, the Perriams, have farmed at Bendigo Station since 1981, and in spite of a comprehensive land management programme, their farm has continued to be plagued by the spread of hieracium and the degradative effects of rabbits. In 1994, Bendigo was one of the first high country stations to undergo the tenure reform process.

For the Perriams, it was a great opportunity to freehold a significant part of the property and achieve a greater sense of ownership from which to diversify land use and income. For a range of interests groups, the review offered the opportunity to gain formal recognition and accommodation of their values within this locality (Federated Mountain Clubs 1994; *New Zealand Farmer* August 3, 1994).

The Perriams have freeholded 7, 997 hectares of the station, which following the retirement of 1, 372 hectares to the Department of Conservation (DOC), cost only $100, 000. The Perriams are understood to be well pleased with the outcome (Ansley 1994). They are in the process of subdividing foreshore land into lakeside sections. Plans are underway to establish an area for growing grapes and possibly other fruit. In conjunction with some Italian businessmen, the Perriams have been able to develop their fine wool business with contacts throughout Europe. They have redeveloped a shop at Tarras where they sell jerseys to tourists made from wool produced at Bendigo.

The land that that has been transferred to DOC includes kanuka forest and the remains of old gold towns with significant heritage values. The remaining 1, 920 hectares has been set up as the Dunstan Conservation Area, under a special lease administered by DOC. The region includes mountain tops valued for tramping, skiing and mountain biking, as well as land considered by the Perriams to be valuable for summer grazing. Although recreationists and conservation groups are concerned that continued grazing will harm what they argue is an already depleted slope, the Perriams will take responsibility for land management in the area including pest and weed control (*New Zealand Farmer* August 3, 1994).

The Government points to Bendigo as the model settlement, which successfully accommodates a range of values and enhances land use diversification. Nevertheless, Bendigo contains land with high public interest values, in other words a tradeable asset. Some runholders are concerned that without land that contains high conservation or recreational values, that they will not be able to trade land or be able to afford to freehold. In some cases, it may be that pastoral lands continue to be managed largely as they always have been. In many cases however, tenure reform provides opportunities which can enhance a more diverse range of sustainable land uses, and facilitate resolution of a number of conflicts.

"In the postmodern world, tradition, culture, meaning and identity are increasingly related to place" (McDowell 1994: 168). The landscapes of the South Island high country are increasingly drawn upon, by a number of different interest groups, to define for themselves an identity. Amidst a changing political economic, environmental and cultural context, there has developed a number of conflicts, between different interest groups competing for the benefits which are seen to be derived from the control and use of high country landscapes. There is no single solution to high country conflicts. But progress can be made by forging a number of locally based resolutions which recognise the multiplicity of interests for which the high country landscapes are valued.

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